

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1887.

IN LATER YEARS.

I THINK it must have been the illness he had in the summer that tended to finally break down Valentine Chandler. He had been whirling along all kinds of doubtful ways before, but when a sort of low fever attacked him, and he had to lie by for weeks, he was about done for.

That's how we found it when we got to Crabb Cot in October. Valentine, what with illness, his wild ways and his ill-luck, had come to grief, and was about to emigrate to Canada. His once flourishing practice had run away from him; no prospect seemed left to him in the old country.

"It is an awful pity!" I remarked to Mrs. Cramp, having overtaken her in the Islip Road, as she was walking towards home.

"Ay, it is that, Johnny Ludlow," she said, turning her comely face to me, the strings of her black bonnet tied in a big bow under her chin. "Not much else was to be expected, taking all things into consideration. George Chandler, Tom's brother, makes a right good thing of it in Canada, farming, and Val is going to him."

"We hear that Val's mother is leaving North Villa."

"She can't afford to stay in it now," returned Mrs. Cramp. "She has let it to the Miss Dennets, and taken a pretty little place for herself in Crabb. Georgiana has gone out as a governess."

"Will she like that?"

"Ah, Master Johnny! There are odd moments throughout all our lives when we have to do things we don't like any more than we like poison.—I hate to look at the place," cried Mrs. Cramp, energetically. "When I think of Mrs. Jacob's having to turn out of it, and all through Val's folly, it gives me the creeps."

This applied to North Villa, of which we then were abreast. Mrs. Cramp turned her face from it, and went on sideways, like a crab.

"Why, here's Jane Preen!"

She was coming along quietly in the afternoon sunshine. I thought her altered. The once pretty blush-rose of her dimpled cheeks had

faded ; in her soft blue eyes, so like Oliver's, lay a look of sadness. He had been dead about a year now. But the blush came back again, and the eyes lighted up with smiles as I took her hand. Mrs. Cramp went on ; she was in a hurry to reach her home, which lay between Islip and Crabb. Jane rang the bell at North Villa.

"Shall I take a run over to Duck Brook to-morrow, Jane, and sit with you in the Inlets, and we'll have a spell of gossip together?"

"I never sit in the Inlets now," she said, in a half whisper, turning her face away.

"Forgive me, Jane," I cried, repenting my thoughtlessness ; and she disappeared up the garden path.

Susan opened the door. Her mistress was out, she said, but Miss Clementina was at home. It was Clementina that Jane wanted to see.

Valentine, still weak, was lying on the sofa in the parlour when Jane entered. He got up, all excitement at seeing her, and they sat down together.

"I brought this for Clementina," she said, placing a paper parcel on the table. "It is a pattern which she asked me for. Are you growing stronger?"

"Clementina is about somewhere," he observed ; "the others are out. Yes, I am growing stronger ; but it seems to me that I am a long while about it."

They sat on in silence, side by side, neither speaking. Valentine took Jane's hand and held it within his own, which rested on his knee. It seemed that they had lost their tongues—as we say to the children.

"Is it all decided?" asked Jane presently. "Quite decided?"

"Quite, Jane. Nothing else is left for me."

She caught up her breath with one of those long sighs that tell of inward tribulation.

"I should have been over to see you before this, Jane, but that my legs would not carry me to Duck Brook and back again without sitting down by the wayside. And you—you hardly ever come here now."

A deep flush passed swiftly over Jane's face. She had not liked to call at the troubled house. And she very rarely came so far as Crabb now : there seemed to be no plea for it.

"What will be the end, Val?" she whispered.

Valentine groaned. "I try not to think of it, my dear. When I cannot put all thought of the future from me, it gives me more torment than I know how to bear. If only ——"

The door opened, and in came Clementina, arresting what he had been about to say.

"This is the pattern you asked me for, Clementina," Jane said, rising to depart on her return home. For she would not risk passing the Inlets after sunset.

A week or two went by, and the time of Valentine Chandler's

departure arrived. He had grown well and strong apparently, and went about to say Good-bye to people in a subdued fashion. The Squire took him apart when Val came for that purpose to us, and talked to him in private. Tod called it a "Curtain Lecture." Valentine was to leave Crabb at daybreak on the Saturday morning for London, and go at once on board the ship lying in the docks about to steam away for Quebec.

It perhaps surprised none of us who knew the Chandler girls that they should be seen tearing over the parish on the Friday afternoon to invite people to tea. "It will be miserably dull this last evening, you know, Johnny," they said to me in their flying visit; "we couldn't stand it alone. Be sure to come in early: and leave word that Joseph Todhetley is to join us as soon as he gets back again." For Tod had gone out.

According to orders, I was at North Villa betimes: and, just as on that other afternoon, I met Jane Preen at the gate. She had walked in from Duck Brook.

"You are going to spend the evening here, Jane?"

"Yes, it is the last evening," she sighed. "Valentine wished it."

"The girls have been to invite me; wouldn't let me say No. There's to be quite a party."

"A party!" exclaimed Jane, in surprise.

"If they could manage to get one up."

"I am sure Valentine did not know that this morning."

"I daresay not. I asked the girls if Valentine wanted a crowd there on his last evening, and they exclaimed that Valentine never knew what was good for him."

"As you are here, Johnny," she went on, after a pause of silence, "I wonder if you would mind my asking you to do me a favour? It is to walk home with me after tea. I shall not be late this evening."

"Of course I will, Jane."

"I *cannot* go past the Inlets alone after dark," she whispered. "I never do so by daylight but a dreadful shiver seizes me. I—I'm afraid of seeing something."

"Have you ever seen it since that first evening, Jane?"

"Never since. Never once. I do not suppose that I shall ever see it again; but the fear lies upon me."

She went on to explain that the gig could not be sent for her that evening, as Mr. Preen had gone to Alcester in it and taken Sam. Her mood and voice seemed strangely subdued, as if all spirit had left her for ever.

In spite of their efforts, the Miss Chandlers met with little luck. One of the Letsom girls and Tom Coney were all the recruits they were able to pick up. They came dashing in close upon our heels. In the hall stood Valentine's luggage locked and corded, ready for conveyance to the station.

There's not much to relate of that evening: I hardly know why I

allude to it at all—only that these painful records sometimes bring a sad sort of soothing to the weary heart, causing it to look forward to that other life where will be no sorrow and no parting.

Tod came in after tea. He and Coney kept the girls alive, if one might judge by the laughter that echoed from the other room. Tea remained on the table for anyone else who might arrive but Mrs. Jacob Chandler had turned from it to put her feet on the fender. She kept me by her, asking about a slight accident which had happened to one of our servants. Valentine and Jane were standing at the doors of the open window in silence, as if they wanted to take in a view of the garden. And that state of things continued, as it seemed to me, for a good half-hour.

It was a wild night, but very warm for November. White clouds scudded across the face of the sky; moonlight streamed into the room. The fire was low, and the green shade had been placed over the lamp, so that there seemed to be no light but that of the moon.

"Won't you sing a song for the last time, Valentine?" I heard Jane ask him with half a sob.

"Not to night; I'm not equal to it. But, yes, I will; one song," he added, turning round. "Night and day that one song has been ever haunting me, Jane."

He was sitting down to the piano when Mrs. Cramp came in. She said she would go up to take her bonnet off, and Mrs. Chandler went with her. This left me alone at the fire. I should have made a start for the next room where the laughing was, but that I did not like to disturb the song then begun. Jane stood listening just outside the open window, her back against its frame, her hands covering her bent face.

Whether the circumstances and surroundings made an undue impression on me, I know not, but the song struck me as being the most plaintive one I had ever heard and singularly appropriate to that present hour. The singer was departing beyond seas, leaving one he loved hopelessly behind him.

"Remember me, though rolling ocean place its bounds 'twixt thee and me,
Remember me with fond emotion, and believe I'll think of thee."

So it began; and I wish I could recollect how it went on, but I can't; only a line here and there. I think it was set to the tune of Weber's Last Waltz, but I'm not sure. There came a line "My lingering look from thine will sever only with an aching heart;" there came another bit towards the end: "But fail not to remember me."

Nothing in themselves, you will say, these lines; their charm lay in the singing. To listen to their mournful pathos, brought with it a strange intensity of pain. Valentine sang them as very few can sing. That his heart was aching, aching with a bitterness which can never be pictured except by those who have felt it; that Jane's heart was

aching as she listened, was all too evident. You could feel the anguish of their souls. It was in truth a ballad singularly applicable to the time and place.

The song ceased ; the music died away. Jane moved from the piano with a sob that could no longer be suppressed. Valentine sat still and motionless. As to me, I made a quiet glide of it into the other room, just as Mrs. Cramp and Mrs. Jacob Chandler were coming in for some tea. Julietta seized me on one side and Fanny Letsom on the other ; they were going in for forfeits.

Valentine Chandler left the piano and went out, looking for Jane. Not seeing her, he followed on down the garden path, treading on its dry, dead leaves. The wind, sighing and moaning, played amid the tree-branches, nearly bare now ; every other minute the moon was obscured by the flying clouds. Warm though the night was, and grand in its aspect, signs might be detected of the approaching winter.

Jane Preen was standing near the old garden arbour, from which could be seen by daylight the long chain of the beautiful Malvern Hills. Valentine drew Jane within, and seated her by his side.

"Our last meeting ; our last parting, Jane !" he whispered from the depth of his full heart.

"Will it be for ever ?" she wailed.

He took time to answer. "I would willingly say No ; I would *promise* it to you, Jane, but that I doubt myself. I know that it lies with me ; and I know that if God will help me, I may be able to —"

He broke down. He could not go on. Jane bent her head towards him. Drawing it to his shoulder, he continued :

"I have not been able to pull up here, despite the resolutions I have made from time to time. I was one of a fast set of men at Islip, and—somehow—they were stronger than I was. In Canada it may be different. I promise you, my darling, that I will strive to make it so. Do you think this is no lesson to me ?"

"If not —"

"If not, we may never see each other again in this world."

"Oh, Valentine !"

"Only in Heaven. The mistakes we make here may be righted there."

"And will it be *nothing* to you, never to see me again here ?—no sorrow or pain ?"

"*No sorrow or pain !*" Valentine echoed the words out of the very depths of woe. Even then the pain within him was almost greater than he could bear.

They sat on in silence, with their aching hearts. Words fail in an hour of anguish such as this. An hour that comes perhaps but once in a lifetime ; to some of us, never. Jane's face lay nestled

against his shoulder; her hand was in his clasp. Val's tears were falling; he was weak yet from his recent illness; Jane's despair was beyond tears.

We were in the height and swing of our forfeits when Valentine and Jane came in. They could not remain in the arbour all night, you see, romantic and lovely though it might be to sit in the moonlight. Jane said she must be going home; her mother had charged her not to be late.

When she came down with her things on, I, remembering what she had asked me, took my hat and waited for her in the hall. But Valentine came out with her.

"Thank you all the same, Johnny," she said to me. And I went back to the forfeits.

They went off together, Jane's arm within his—their last walk, perhaps, in this world. But it seemed that they could not talk any more than they did in the garden, and went along for the most part in silence. Just before turning into Brook Lane they met Tom Chandler—he who was doing so much for Valentine in this emigration matter. He had come from Islip to spend a last hour with his cousin.

"Go on, Tom; you'll find them all at home," said Valentine. "I shall not be very long after you."

Upon coming to the Inlets, Jane clung closer to Valentine's arm. It was here that she had seen her unfortunate brother Oliver standing, after his death. Valentine hastily passed his arm round her to impart a sense of protection.

At the gate they parted, taking their farewell hand-shake, their last kiss. "God help you, my dear!" breathed Valentine. "And if—if we never meet again, believe that no other will ever love you as I have loved."

He turned back on the road he had come, and Jane went in to her desolate home.

II.

"AUNT Mary Ann, I've come back, and brought a visitor with me!"

Mrs. Mary Ann Cramp, superintending the preserving of a pan of morella cherries over the fire in her spacious kitchen, turned round in surprise. I was perched on the arm of the old oak chair, watching the process. I had gone to the farm with a message from Crabb Cot, and Mrs. Cramp, ignoring ceremony, called me into the kitchen.

Standing at the door, with the above announcement, was Julietta Chandler. She had been away on a fortnight's visit.

"Now where on earth did you spring from, Juliet?" asked Mrs. Cramp. "I did not expect you to-day. A visitor? Who is it?"

"Cherry Dawson, Aunt Mary Ann; and I didn't think it mattered about letting you know," returned Juliet. They had given up the

longer name, Julietta. "You can see her if, you look through the window; she is getting out of the fly at the gate. Cherry Dawson is the nicest and jolliest girl in the world, and you'll all be in love with her—including you, Johnny Ludlow."

Sure enough, there she was, springing from the fly which had brought them from Crabb station. A light airy figure in a fresh brown-holland dress and flapping Leghorn hat. The kitchen window was open, and we could hear her voice all that way off, laughing loudly at something and chattering to the driver. She was very fair, with pretty white teeth, and a pink colour on her saucy face.

Mrs. Cramp left Sally to the cherries, to open the hall door and opened it herself, calling the other maid, Joan, to come down. The visitor flew in with a run and a sparkling laugh, and at once kissed Mrs. Cramp on both cheeks, without saying, With your leave or By your leave. I think she would not have minded kissing me, for she came dancing up and shook my hand.

"It's Johnny Ludlow, Cherry," said Juliet.

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Miss Cherry—and with that she took the other hand and shook that also.

She was really very unsophisticated; or—very much the other way. One cannot quite tell at a first moment. But, let her be which she might, there was one thing about her that took the eyes by storm. It was her hair.

Whether her rapid movements had unfastened it, or whether she wore it so, I knew not, but it fell on her shoulders like a shower of gold. Her small face seemed to be set in an amber aureole. I had never before seen hair so absolutely resembling the colour of pure gold. As she ran back to Mrs. Cramp from me, it glittered in the sunlight. The shower of gold in which Jupiter went courting Danæ could hardly have been more seductive than this.

"I know you don't mind my coming uninvited, you dear Mrs. Cramp!" she exclaimed joyously. "I did so want to make your acquaintance. And Clementina was growing such a cross-patch. It's not Tim's fault if he can't come back yet. Is it now?"

"I do not know anything about it," answered Mrs. Cramp, apparently not quite sure what to make of her.

With this additional company I thought it well to come away, and wished them good morning. At the gate stood the fly still, the horse resting.

"Like to take a lift, Mr. Johnny, as far as your place?" asked the man civilly. "I am just starting back."

"No thank you, Lease," I answered. "I am going across to Duck Brook."

"Curious young party that, ain't it, sir?" said Lease, pointing the whip over his shoulder towards the house. "She went and asked me if Mrs. Cramp warn't an old Image, born in the year One, and didn't she get her gowns out of Noah's Ark? And while I was

against his shoulder; her hand was in his clasp. Val's tears were falling; he was weak yet from his recent illness; Jane's despair was beyond tears.

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staring at her saying that, she went off into shouts of laughter enough to frighten the horse. Did you see her hair, sir?"

I nodded.

"For my part, I don't favour that bright yaller for hair, Mr. Johnny. I never knew but one woman have such, and she was more deceitful than a she-fox."

Lease touched his hat, and drove off. He was cousin in a remote degree to poor Maria Lease, and to Lease the pointsman who had caused the accident to the train at Crabb junction and died of the trouble. At that moment, Fred Scott came up; a short, dark young fellow, with fierce black whiskers, good-natured and rather soft. He was fond of playing billiards at the Bell at Islip; had been doing it for some years now.

"I say, Ludlow, has that fly come with Juliet Chandler? Is she back again?"

"Just come. She has brought someone with her: a girl with golden hair"

"Oh bother *her!*" returned Fred. "But it has been as dull as ditchwater without Juliet."

He dashed in at Mrs. Cramp's gate and up the winding path. I turned into the Islip Road, and crossed it to take Brook Lane. The leaves were beginning to put on the tints of autumn; the grain was nearly all gathered.

Time the healer! As Mrs. Todhetley says, it may well be called so. Heaven in mercy sends it to the sick and heavy-laden with healing on its wings. Nearly three years had slipped by since the departure for Canada of Valentine Chandler; four years since the tragic death of Oliver Preen.

There are few changes to record. Things and people were for the most part going on as they had done. It was reported that Valentine had turned over a new leaf from the hour he landed over yonder, becoming thoroughly staid and steady. Early in the summer of this year his mother had shut up her cottage at North Crabb to go to Guernsey, on the invitation of a sister, from whom she had expectations. Upon this, Julietta, who lived with her mother, went on a long visit to Mrs. Cramp.

Clementina had married. Her husband was a Mr. Timothy Dawson, junior partner in a wholesale firm of general merchants in Birmingham; they had also a house in New York. Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Dawson lived in a white villa at Edgbaston, and went in for style and fashion. At least she did, which might go without telling. The family in which her sister Georgiana was governess occupied another white villa hard by.

Close upon Juliet's thus taking up her residence with her aunt, finding perhaps the farm rather dull, she struck up a flirtation with Fred Scott, or he with her. They were everlastingly together, mooning about Mrs. Cramp's grounds, or sauntering up and down the Islip

Road. Juliet gave out that they were engaged. No one believed it. At present Fred had nothing to marry upon : his mother, just about as soft as himself, supplied him with as much pocket-money as he asked for, and there his funds ended.

Juliet had now returned from a week or two's visit she had been paying Clementina, bringing with her, uninvited, the young lady with the golden hair. That hair seemed to be before my eyes as a picture as I walked along. She was Timothy Dawson's young half-sister. Both the girls had grown tired of staying with Clementina, who worried herself and everyone about her just now, because her husband was detained longer than he had anticipated in New York, whither he had gone on business.

Mr. Frederick Scott had said "Bother" in contempt when he first heard of the visitor with the golden hair. He did not say it long. Miss Cherry Dawson cast a spell upon him. He had never met such a rattling, laughing girl in all his born days, which was how he phrased it ; had never seen such bewildering hair. Cherry fascinated him. Forgetting his allegiance to Juliet, faithless swain that he was, he went right over to the enemy. Miss Cherry, nothing loth, accepted his homage openly, and enjoyed the raging jealousy of Juliet.

In the midst of this, Juliet received a telegram from Edgbaston. Her sister Clementina was taken suddenly ill and wanted her. She must take the first train.

"Of course you are coming with me, Cherry!" said Juliet.

"Of course I am not," laughed Cherry. "I'm very happy here—if dear Mrs. Cramp will let me stay with her. You'll be back again in a day or two."

Not seeing any polite way to send her away in the face of this, Mrs. Cramp let her stay on. Juliet was away a week—and a nice time the other one and Fred had of it, improving the shining hours with soft speeches and love-making. When Juliet got back again, she felt ready to turn herself into a female Bluebeard, and cut off Cherry's golden hair.

Close upon that Mrs. Cramp held her harvest-home. "You may as well come early, and we'll have tea on the lawn," she said, when inviting us.

It was a fine afternoon, warm as summer, though September was drawing to its close. Many of the old friends you have heard of were there. Mary MacEveril and her cousin Dick, who seemed to be carrying on a little with one another, as Tod called it ; the Letsoms, boys and girls ; Emma Chandler, who looked younger than ever, though she could boast of two babies : and others. Jane Preen was there, the weary look which her mild and pretty face had gained latterly very plainly to be seen. We roamed at will about the grounds, and had tea under the large weeping elm tree. Altogether the gathering brought forcibly to mind that other gathering ; that of

the pic-nic, four summers ago, when we had sung songs in light-hearted glee, and poor Oliver Preen must have been ready to die of mortal pain.

The element of interest to-day lay in Miss Cherry Dawson. In her undisguised assumption of ownership in Fred Scott, and in Juliet Chandler's rampant jealousy of the pair. You should have seen the girl flitting about like a fairy, in her white muslin frock, the golden shower of curls falling around her like nothing but threads of transparent amber. Fred was evidently very far gone. Juliet wore white also.

Whether things would have come that evening to the startling pass they did, but for an unfortunate remark made in thoughtless fun, not in malice, I cannot tell. It gave a sting to Juliet that she could not bear. A ridiculous pastime was going on. Some of them were holding hands in a circle and dancing round to the "House that Jack Built," each one reciting a sentence in turn. If you forgot your sentence, you paid a forfeit. The one falling to Juliet Chandler was "This is the maiden all forlorn." "Why, that's exactly what you are, Juliet!" cried Tom Coney, impulsively, and a laugh went round. Juliet said nothing, but I saw her face change to the hue of death. The golden hair of the other damsel was gleaming just then within view amidst the trees, accompanied by the black head and black whiskers of Mr. Fred Scott.

"That young man must have a rare time of it between the two," whispered Tod to me. "As good as the ass between the bundles of hay."

At dusk began the fun of the harvest-home. Mrs. Cramp's labourers and their wives sat in the large kitchen at an abundant board. Hot beef, mutton and hams crowded it with vegetables; and of fruit pies and tarts there was a goodly show. Some of us helped to wait on them, and that was the best fun of all.

They had all taken as much as they could possibly eat, and were in the full glee of cider and beer and delight; a young man in a clean white smock-frock was sheepishly indulging the table with a song: "Young Roger of the Valley," and I was laughing till I had to hold my sides; when Mrs. Cramp touched me on the back. She sat with the Miss Dennets, in the little parlour off the kitchen, in full view of the company. I sat on the door-sill between them.

"Johnny," she whispered, "I don't see Juliet and Cherry Dawson. Have they been in at all?"

I did not remember to have seen them; or Fred Scott either.

"Just go out and look for the two girls, will you, Johnny. It's too late for them to be out, though it is a warm night. Tell them I say they are to come in at once," said Mrs. Cramp.

Not half a stone's throw from the house I found them—quarrelling. Their noisy voices guided me. A brilliant moon lighted up the scene. The young ladies were taunting one another; Juliet in frantic

passion; Cherry in sarcastic mockery. Fred Scott, after trying in vain to throw oil upon the troubled waters, had given it up as hopeless, and stood leaning against a tree in silent patience.

"It's quite true," Cherry was saying tauntingly when I got up. "We *are* engaged. We shall be married shortly. Come!"

"You are not," raved Juliet, her voice trembling with the intense rage she was in. "He was engaged to me before you came here; he is engaged to me still."

Cherry laughed out in mockery. "Dear me! old maids do deceive themselves so!"

Very hard, that, and Juliet winced. She was five or six years older than the fairy. How Fred relished the bringing home to him of his sins, I leave you to judge.

"I say, can't you have done with this, you silly girls?" he cried out meekly.

"In a short time you'll have our wedding-cards," went on Cherry. "It's all arranged. He's only waiting for me to decide whether it shall take place here or at Gretna Green."

Juliet dashed round to face Fred Scott. "If this be true; if you do behave in this false way to me, I'll not survive it," she said, hardly able to bring the words out in her storm of passion. "Do you hear me? I'll not live to see it, I say; and my ghost shall haunt her for her whole life after."

"Come now, easy, Juliet," pleaded Fred uncomfortably. "It's all nonsense, you know."

"I think it is; I think she is saying this to aggravate me," assented Juliet, subsiding to a sort of calmness. "If not, take you warning, Cherry Dawson, for I'll keep my word. My apparition shall haunt you for ever and ever."

"It had better begin to-night, then, for you'll soon find out that it's as true as gospel," retorted Cherry.

Managing at last to get in a word, I delivered Mrs. Cramp's message: they were to come in instantly. Fred obeyed it with immense relief and ran in before me. The two girls would follow, I concluded, when their jarring had spent itself. The last glimpse I had of them, they were stretching out their faces at each other like a couple of storks. Juliet's straw hat had fallen from the back of her head and was hanging by its strings round her neck.

"Oh, they're coming," spoke up Fred, in answer to Mrs. Cramp. "It's very nice out there; the moon's bright as day."

And presently I heard the laugh of Cherry Dawson amidst us. Her golden hair, her scarlet cheeks and her blue eyes were all sparkling together.

III.

It was the next morning. We were at breakfast, answering Mr. and Mrs. Todhetley's questions about the harvest home, when old Thomas

came in, all sad and scared, to tell some news. Juliet Chandler was dead : she had destroyed herself.

Of course the Squire at once attacked Thomas for saying it. But a sick feeling of conviction arose within me that it was true. One of the servants, out of doors on an errand, had heard it from a man in the road. The Squire sat rubbing his face, which had turned hot.

Leaving the breakfast table, I started for Mrs. Cramp's. Miss Susan Dennet was standing at her gate, her white handkerchief thrown over her head, her pale face limp with fright.

"Johnny," she called to me, "have you heard? Do you think it can be true?"

"Well, I hope not, Miss Susan. I am now going there to see. What I'm thinking of is this—if it is not true, how can such a report have arisen?"

Tod caught me up, and we found the farm in distress and commotion. It was all true; and poor Mrs. Cramp was almost dumb with dismay. These were the particulars: The previous evening, Juliet did not appear at the late supper, laid in the dining-room for the guests; at least, no one remembered to have seen her. Later, when the guests had left, and Mrs. Cramp was in the kitchen busy with her maids, Cherry Dawson looked in, bed-candle in hand, to say good-night. "I suppose Juliet is going up with you," remarked Mrs. Cramp. "Oh, Juliet went up ages ago," said Cherry, in answer.

The night passed quietly. Early in the morning one of the farm men went to the eel-pond to put in a net, and saw some clothes lying on the brink. Rushing indoors, he brought out Sally. She knew the things at once. There lay the white dress and the pink ribbons which Juliet had worn the night before; the straw hat, and a small fleecy handkerchief which she had tied round her neck at sundown. Pinned to the sash and the dress was a piece of paper, on which was written in ink, in a large hand—Juliet's hand:

"I SAID I WOULD DO IT; AND I WILL HAUNT HER FOR EVER-MORE."

Of course she had taken these things off and left them on the bank, with the memorandum pinned to them, to make known that she had flung herself into the pond.

"I can scarcely believe it; it seems so incredible," sighed poor Mrs. Cramp to the Squire, who had come bustling in. "Juliet, as I should have thought, was one of the very last girls to do such a thing."

The next to appear upon the scene, puffing and panting with agitation, was Fred Scott. He asked which of the two girls it was, having heard only a garbled account; and now learned that it was Juliet. As to Cherry Dawson, she was shut up in her bedroom in shrieking hysterics. Men were preparing to drag the pond in search of—well, what was lying there.

The pond was at the end of the garden, near the fence that divided it from the three-acre field. Nothing had been disturbed. The white frock and pink ribbons were lying with the paper pinned to them; the hat was close by. A yard off was the white woollen handkerchief; and near it I saw the faded bunch of mignonette which Juliet had worn in her waistband. It looked as if she had flung the things off in desperation.

Standing later in the large parlour, listening to comments and opinions, one question troubled me—Ought I to tell what I knew of the quarrel? It might look like treachery towards Scott and the girl upstairs; but, should that poor dead Juliet—

The doubt was suddenly solved for me.

"What I want to get at is this," urged the Squire: "did anything happen to drive her to this? One doesn't throw oneself into an eel-pond for nothing in one's sober senses."

"Miss Juliet and Miss Dawson had a quarrel out o' doors last night," struck in Joan, for the two servants were assisting at the conference. "Sally heard 'em."

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Cramp. "Speak up."

"Well, it's true, ma'am," said Sally, coming forward. "I went out to shake a tray-cloth, and heard voices at a distance, all in a rage like; so I just stepped on a bit to see what it meant. The two young lasses was snarling at one another like anything. Miss Juliet was ——"

"What were they quarrelling about?" interrupted the Squire.

"Well, sir, it seemed to be about Mr. Scott—which of 'em had him for a sweetheart, and which of 'em hadn't. Mr. Johnny Ludlow ran up as I came in: perhaps he heard more than I did."

After that, there was nothing for it but to let the past scene come out; and Mrs. Cramp had the pleasure of being enlightened as to the rivalry which had been going on under her roof and the ill-feeling which had arisen out of it. Fred Scott, to do him justice, spoke up like a man, not denying the flirtation he had carried on, first with Juliet, next with Cherry, but he declared most positively that it had never been serious on any side.

The Squire wheeled round. "Just say what you mean by that, Mr. Frederick. What do you call serious?"

"I never said a word to either of them which could suggest serious intention, sir. I never hinted at such a thing as getting married."

"Now look here, young man," cried Mrs. Cramp, taking her handkerchief from her troubled face, "what right had you to do it? By what right did you play upon those young girls with your silly speeches and your flirting ways, if you meant nothing?—nothing to either of them?"

"I am sorry for it now, ma'am," said Scott, eating humble pie; "I wouldn't have done it for the world had I foreseen this. It

was just a bit of flirting, and nothing else. And neither of them ever thought it was anything else; they knew better; only they became snappish with one another."

"Did not think you meant marrying?" cried the Squire sarcastically, fixing Scott with his spectacles.

"Just so, sir. Why, how could I mean it?" went on Scott in his simple way. "I've no money, while my mother lives, to set up a wife or a house; she wouldn't let me. I joked and laughed with the two girls, and they joked and laughed back again. I don't care what they may have said between themselves—they *knew* there was nothing in it."

Scott was right, so far. All the world, including the Chandlers and poor Juliet, knew that Scott was no more likely to marry than the man in the moon.

"And you could stand by quietly last night when they were having, it seems, this bitter quarrel, and not stop it?" exclaimed Mrs. Cramp.

"They would not listen to me," returned Scott. "I went between them; spoke to one, spoke to the other; told them what they were quarrelling about was utter nonsense—and the more I said, the more they wrangled. Johnny Ludlow saw how it was; he came up at the end of it."

Cherry Dawson was sent for downstairs, and came in between Sally and Joan, limp and tearful, and shaking with fright. Mrs. Cramp questioned her.

"It was all done in fun," she said, with a sob. "Juliet and I teased one another. It was as much her fault as mine. Fred Scott needn't talk. I'm sure *I* don't want him. I've somebody waiting for me at Edgbaston, if I choose. Scott may go to York!"

"Suppose you mind your manners, young woman: you've done enough mischief in my house without forgetting *them*," reproved Mrs. Cramp. "I want to know when you last saw Juliet."

"We came in together after the quarrel. She ran up to her room; I joined the rest of you. As she did not come down to supper, I thought she had gone to bed. O-o-o-o-o!" shivered Cherry; "and she says she'll haunt me! I shall never dare to be alone in the dark again."

Mr. Fred Scott took his departure, glad no doubt to do it, carrying with him a hint from Mrs. Cramp that for the present his visits must cease, unless he should be required to give evidence at the inquest. As he went out, Mr. Paul and Tom Chandler came in together. Tom, strong in plain common-sense, could not at all understand it.

"Passion must have overbalanced her reason and driven her mad," he said, aside, to me. "The taunts of that Dawson girl did it, I reckon."

"Blighted love," said I.

"Moonshine," answered Tom Chandler. "Juliet, poor girl, had

gone in for too many flirtations to care much for Scott. As to that golden-haired one, *her* life is passed in nothing else; getting out of one love affair into another, month in, month out. Her brother Tim once told her so in my presence. No, Johnny, it is a terrible calamity, but I shall never understand how she came to do it as long as I live."

I was not sure that I should. Juliet was very practical; not one of your moaning, sighing, die-away sort of girls who lose their brains for love, like crazy Jane. It was a dreadful thing, whatever might have been the cause, and we were all sorry for Mrs. Cramp. Nothing had stirred us like this since the death of Oliver Preen.

Georgiana Chandler came flying over from Birmingham in a state of excitement. Cherry Dawson had gone then, or Georgie might have shaken her to pieces. When put up, Georgie had a temper of her own. Cherry had disappeared into the wilds of Devonshire, where her home was, and where she most devoutly hoped Juliet's ghost would not find its way.

"It is an awful thing to have taken place in your house, Aunt Mary Ann. And why unhappy, ill-fated Juliet should have—but I can't talk of it," broke off Georgie.

"I know that I am ashamed of its having happened here, Georgiana," assented Mrs. Cramp. "I am not alluding to the sad termination, but to that parcel of nonsense, the sweethearting."

"Clementina is more heartless than an owl over it," continued Georgie, making her remarks. "She says it serves Juliet right for her flirting folly, and she hopes Cherry will be haunted till her yellow curls turn grey."

The more they dragged, the less chance there seemed of finding Juliet. Nothing came up but eels. It was known that the eel pond had a hole or two in it which no drags could penetrate. Gloom settled down upon us all. Mrs. Cramp's healthy cheeks lost some of their redness. One day, calling at Crabb Cot, she privately told us that the trouble would lie upon her for ever. The best word Tod gave to it was—that he would go a day's march with peas in his shoes to see a certain lady hanging by her golden hair on a sour apple tree.

It was a bleak October evening. Jane Preen, in her old shawl and garden hat, was hurrying to Dame Sym's on an errand for her mother. The cold wind sighed and moaned in the trees, clouds flitted across the face of the crescent moon. It scarcely lighted up the little old church beyond the Triangle, and the graves in the churchyard beneath, Oliver's amidst them. Jane shivered, and ran into Mrs. Sym's.

Carrying back her parcel, she turned in at the garden gate and stood leaning over it for a few moments. Tears were coursing down

her cheeks. Life for a long time had seemed very hard to Jane; no hope anywhere.

The sound of quick footsteps broke upon her ear, and a gentleman came into view. She rather wondered who it was; whether anyone was coming to call on her father.

"Jane! Jane!"

With a faint cry, she fell into the arms opened to receive her—those of Valentine Chandler. He went away, a ne'er-do-well, three years ago, shattered in health, shaken in spirit; he had returned a healthy, hearty man, all his parts about him.

Yes, Valentine had turned over a new leaf from the moment he touched the Canadian shores. He had put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest, had persevered and prospered. And now he had a profitable farm of his own, and a pretty house upon it, all in readiness for Jane.

"We have heard from time to time that you were doing well," she said, with a sob of joy. "Oh, Valentine, how good it is! To have done it all yourself!"

"Not altogether myself, Jane," he answered. "I did my best, and God sent His blessing upon it."

Jane no longer felt the night cold, the wind bleak, or remembered that her mother was waiting for the parcel. They paced the old wilderness of a garden, arm locked within arm. There was something in the windy night to put them in mind of that other night: the night of their parting, when Valentine had sung his song of farewell, and bade her remember him though rolling ocean placed its bounds between them. They had been faithful to one another.

Seated on the bench, under the walnut tree, the very spot on which poor Oliver had sat after that rush home from his fatal visit to Mr. Paul's office at Islip, Jane ventured to say a word about Juliet, and, to her surprise, found that Valentine knew nothing.

"I have not heard any news yet, Jane," he said. "I came straight to you from the station. Presently I shall go back to astonish Aunt Mary Ann. Why? What about Juliet?"

Jane enlightened him by degrees, giving him one particular after another. Valentine listening in silence to the end.

"I don't believe it."

"Don't believe it!" exclaimed Jane.

"Not a syllable of it."

"But what do you mean? What don't you believe?"

"That Juliet threw herself into the pond. My dear, she is not the kind of girl to do it; she'd no more do such a thing than I should."

"Oh, Val! It is true the drags brought up nothing but eels; but——"

"Of course they didn't. There's nothing but eels there to bring."

"Then where can Juliet be?—what is the mystery?" dissented Jane. "What became of her?"

"That I don't know. Rely upon it, Janey, she is not there. She'd never jump into that cold pond. How long ago is this?"

"Nearly a month. Three weeks last Thursday."

"Ah," said Valentine. "Well, I'll see if I can get to the bottom of it."

Showing himself indoors to Mr. and Mrs. Preen for a few minutes, Valentine told her his plans. He had come over for one month; he knew his mother was away, and her house shut up. Mrs. Cramp, recovering from her surprise, told him he was welcome as the sun in harvest. She had been more grieved when Valentine went wrong than the world suspected.

Seated over the fire, in her comfortable parlour, after supper, Valentine told her his plans. He had come over for one month; could not leave his farm longer; just to shake hands with them all, and to take Jane Preen back with him. That discussed, Mrs. Cramp entered gingerly upon the sad news about Juliet—not having thought well to deluge him with it the moment he came in. Valentine refused to believe it—as he had refused with Jane.

"Bless the boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Cramp, staring. "What on earth makes him say such a thing?"

"Because I am sure of it, Aunt Mary Ann. Fancy strong-minded Juliet throwing herself into an eel pond! She is gadding about somewhere, deep already, I daresay, in another flirtation."

Mrs. Cramp, waiting to collect her scared senses, shook her head plaintively. "My dear," she said, "I don't pretend to know the fashion of things in the outlandish world in which you live, but over here it couldn't be. Once a girl has been drowned in a pond—whether eel, duck, or carp pond, what matters it?—she can't come to life again and go about flirting."

To us all Valentine was, as Mrs. Cramp had phrased it, more welcome than the sun in harvest, and was made much of. When a young fellow has been going to the bad, and has the resolution to pull up from it and to persevere, he should be honoured, cried the Squire—and we did our best to honour Val. For a week or two there was nothing but visiting everywhere. He was then going to Guernsey to see his mother, when she wrote to stop him, saying she was coming back to Crabb for his wedding.

And while Valentine was reading his mother's letter at the tea-table—for the Channel Islands letters always came in by the second post—Mrs. Cramp was opening one directed to her. Suddenly Valentine heard a gurgle—and next a moan. Looking up, he saw his aunt gasping for breath, her face an indescribable mixture of emotions.

"Why, Aunt Mary Ann," he cried; "are you ill?"

"If I'm not ill, I might be," retorted Mrs. Cramp. "Here's a letter from that wretched girl—that Juliet! She's not dead after all. She has been in Guernsey all this time."

Valentine paused a moment to take in the truth of the announcement, and then burst into laughter, deep and long. Mrs. Cramp handed him the letter.

"DEAR AUNT MARY ANN,—I hope you will forgive me ! Georgie writes word that you have been in a way about me. I thought you'd be *sure* to guess it was only a trick. I did it to give a thorough fright to that wicked cat ; you can't think how full of malice she is. I put on my old navy-blue serge and close winter bonnet, which no one would be likely to miss or remember, and carried the other things to the edge of the pond and left them there. While you were at supper I stole away, caught the last train at Crabb Junction, and surprised Clementina at Edgbaston. She promised to be secret—she hates that she-cat—and the next morning I started for Guernsey. Clementina did not tell Georgie till a week ago, after she heard that Valentine would not believe it, and then Georgie wrote to me and blew me up. I am enchanted to hear that the toad passes her nights in horrid fear of seeing my ghost, and that her yellow hair is turning blue ; Georgie says it is.—Your ever affectionate and repentant niece,

" JULIETTA.

"P.S.—I hope you will believe I am very sorry for paining you, dear Aunt Mary Ann. And I want to tell you that I think it likely I shall soon be married. An old gentleman out here who has a beautiful house and lots of money admires me very much. Please let Fred Scott know this."

And so, there it was—Julietta was in the land of the living and had never been out of it. And we had gone through our fright and pain unnecessarily, and the poor eels had been disturbed for nothing.

They were married at the little church at Duck Brook ; no ceremony, hardly anybody invited to be at it. Mr. Preen gave Jane away. Tom Chandler and Emma were there, and Mrs. Jacob Chandler and Mrs. Cramp. Jane asked me to go—to see the last of her, she said. She wore a plain silk dress of a greyish colour, and a white straw bonnet with a little bit of orange blossom—which she took off before they started on their journey. For they went off at once to Liverpool—and would sail the next day for their new home.

And Valentine is always steady and prospering, and Jane says Canada is better than England and she wouldn't come back for the world.

And Juliet is married and lives in Guernsey, and drives about with her old husband in his handsome carriage and pair. But Mrs. Cramp has not forgiven her yet.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE PEOPLE IN THE STEEPLE.

BY PAUL CUSHING.

FOR more years than I care to remember now, Christmas Day has been mainly associated with a curious bit of experience which, with your leave, courteous reader, I will now relate.

At the time I refer to I was Private Secretary to a rising statesman, whose talents and income I much admired. I am not a private secretary any longer. My chief went up, up, up splendidly in the world of political renown and honour, and I went up with him, by sheer dint of hanging on to his coat-tails, so to speak.

In my secretarial capacity I had knocked up a pretty close friendship with a young Member of the House whose seat, though not his constituency, was in Derbyshire. During the season I had met him and his bride, and his bride's sister, pretty frequently at different houses. Both the ladies were so sweet and fascinating that I felt in duty bound to fall in love with at least one of them. The bride's sister was a beautiful girl, well connected, with a noble nature and a handsome fortune. I, Dick Treherne, was poor; she, Dorothea Genet, was rich, and as full of charm as a well-tended flower-garden is of perfume. Therefore, when I got a note, early in December, from my friend Mr. Endymion Lennier, inviting me to spend some weeks with them at Pepyswick, I lost no time in accepting the invitation. I expected to meet Dorothea at Pepyswick Grange. In a few days I packed up my traps and went down to the wonderful county.

A right royal welcome awaited me from both host and hostess; a sweet smile, a blush, and a prettily-turned sentence from the divine Dorothea. That very night I began to lay siege to the noble castle of her heart.

I found Pepyswick Grange a huge cluster of chimneys, gables, dormer windows and balconies; built of grey stone, several centuries old, exceedingly quaint and picturesque, and touched with the singular charm of melancholy. The park was extensive, the prospect glorious, the country well-wooded and stocked with game and sweetly watered. The village, a secluded old-world spot, nestled among the big trees at the foot of the Grange.

About a quarter of a mile from the village, on the edge of a wood, stood the parish church, known locally as the Priory. It was a very venerable-looking structure of Norman date, with cruciform ground-plan, massive walls, stone roof, and a central tower of great beauty. The chief doorway was of little interest, but on the north side of the building was a small doorway wondrously rich in carved columns, bearing on their capitals a wealth of arch mouldings. The door itself, which apparently was never used, was worm-eaten, green with

mould, studded with big-headed nails, and enriched with an iron handle and a couple of immense hinges of rare design and workmanship.

Some little distance away was a wonderful yew tree, of great antiquity, with a huge bole and knotted roots and wide-spreading branches. It was the chief of a small tribe of like trees, fat, prosperous, sad-looking.

Without being much of a meditatist or a lover of tombs, I nevertheless found no little charm in the old churchyard. One spot in particular pleased me. It was a smooth and comfortable seat at the foot of a yew-tree, formed of the serpentine roots. Sitting there, well sheltered from the wind, I had a capital view of the tower and the northern doorway in front of me. To the left was a large wood, full of rich winter beauty, exceedingly pleasant to the eye; while on the right a few fields were visible through the trees, a couple of haystacks, and away up against the sky a stretch of distant rusty moorland.

Pipe in mouth, book in hand, blue sky overhead, no sound save the chatter of a sparrow or the cawing of a slowly-sailing rook, or the soft mysterious voices of the forest, I sat with my back against the tree and forgot, for many an hour, the politics of my chief and the divine Dorothea herself, and dreamed dreams, and saw visions, and was happy as an owl in an ivy bush.

I did not care to give away my retreat to the people at the Grange, for various small reasons. So I said nothing about the Priory in the way of conversation. Said Lennier, however, one day:

"Have you seen the church yet, Treherne?"

"Yes. A curious old place with a fine doorway on the north side."

"There is not a finer in the county. We are very proud of it, I can assure you."

"Where does it lead to, may I ask?"

"Oh it isn't used now at all; hasn't been for years. It led down to a vault under the chancel that was never used. It is bricked up now inside."

"How is that?"

"Well, I almost forget the story, to tell you the truth. I think it must be forty or fifty years since it occurred; but one day the old sexton paid a visit to the vault and found the body of a murdered man there. It made a great excitement at the time, I remember my father telling me."

"My stars, Lennier, that is quite interesting. Whose body was it?" Lennier shook his head.

"Was the murderer ever found?"

"I think not. All I distinctly remember is, that there is a wide passage behind the door, and the Vicar had it bricked up right away. Of course there is a ghost on the scene now, and I believe it would take a heavy bribe to induce any villager to cross the churchyard at night, unless it should be one in his cups."

A cold, delicious shiver ran down my back as Lennier gave this touch of the supernatural.

"Is this ghost still to be seen?" I enquired, with a laugh.

"Ghosts are always to be seen by such as have eyes to see them. I have not those eyes!"

"Tell me, what kind of a ghost is it?"

"It is said to be the image of the murdered man, in mediæval costume, who was thought to be a foreigner. Though why his ghost should get itself up in garments of the middle ages, is more than I can tell."

Of course I did not believe in ghosts any more than did Lennier, but on the other hand I was not such a metaphysical prig as to turn away my eyes when a ghost happened to come round the corner.

I could extract nothing more from Lennier about the ghost. With a touch of good-natured contempt, he referred me to sundry old wives in the village. I dropped the subject as far as he was concerned, but I continued investigations on my own account. I sought out every old wife in Pepyswick, and, as my pocket was full of shillings, and it was known that I was staying at the Grange, I encountered little difficulty with the shy, suspicious and reserved natives.

I soon set the whole village talking of the ghost, much to the terror of the youngsters; but I learned very little of importance. A good many women, and some few men, had seen the ghost, and most of them agreed as to his "mediæval costume," as Lennier styled it. On other points, the evidence was conflicting. Some said he was tall, and others that he was short; this old dame protested he was straight as a dart, and walked with kingly step; while another was equally sure that he had a great hump on his back and walked with a slouch.

In those days I was almost a house-to-house visitor, and, had I carried a bundle of tracts with me, I might have done a good stroke of home-missionary work. I unearthed some odd characters, with now and then a genuine original. But the most interesting find of all was that of the Hermit of Pepyswick himself.

He looked a man of eighty years, with long white locks, and a flowing beard of the same venerable hue; he was bent nearly double, and walked with faltering steps, leaning heavily on a thick staff. His clothes were of uncertain antiquity; though there was nothing mean about them. Like their owner, they were oddly ancient and the worse for wear; but there was a dilapidated dignity about both clothes and man that lifted them quite above the commonplace, and touched them with an interest that was almost romantic.

The first time I saw him, he passed me in the village slowly, and with a grave inclination of his head. I was so struck with his appearance that I lifted my cap and bowed in silence, as one might salute a time-stricken war-chief. Indeed, as I turned round to look at him I had much the same feeling that I have when I see an old war-ship, a

time-honoured gun, a sword with a legend, or the torn and stained colours of a regiment. "A brave old relic, that; a man with a history," I murmured to myself.

I enquired of Lennier if he knew who he was. He laughed and said:

"I wondered how long you would be before you discovered him. He is one of our chief natural curiosities, and is known as the Hermit of Hollow Booth. He passes for a sort of White Magician or seer. The folk think a great deal of him about here!"

"What's his name?"

"That is more than I can tell. In Pepyswick he is the Hermit, pure and simple!"

"Is he a native?"

"Oh, no. I don't think he has been here more than fourteen or fifteen years. Nobody knows who he is, or where he came from."

"He looks a remarkable character. I wonder you haven't tried to find out something of his past history!"

Lennier shrugged his shoulders, and, lighting a cigar, answered:

"My dear Treherne, don't you know that the unknown is more fascinating than the known? If we knew all about our hermit, there would be no longer any mystery or romance attached to him. He would turn out plain John Smith, or ridiculous Plantagenet Smith. Whereas now he is of the lineage of Cagliostro, and the man with the iron mask. If you wish to be happy and wise, don't give way to the modern craze of hunting down every little mystery that crosses your path. I wouldn't explore the Hermit for anything."

"Well, tell me where he lives, and I will explore him for myself," I said, with a touch of impatience in my tone.

"All right, but—keep the result to yourself. I do not wish to be disillusioned. He lives in a dingle some distance in the wood on the far side of the Priory. The chances are, however, that you won't find him at home. He is often away, nobody knows where, for days together."

It was night when this talk took place, and I had the Hermit with me in my dreams till morning. After breakfast, I set out in a snow-storm without informing anyone where I was going.

My destination was the dingle in the wood called Hollow Booth. I did not care to ask Lennier for directions, but trusted to meeting some villager on the way, of whom I could enquire.

Perhaps the storm had something to do with it, but curiously enough I did not meet a soul. Left to my own resources, I made for the wood beside the church and took the first path I could find leading into it. I was soon at sea in a perfect network of paths, which crossed each other in every direction.

After wandering very much in a circle for some time, I struck an opening that looked more like a rabbit track than anything else, and followed it. Fortune favoured me; the track opened out as I proceeded, and in a short space of time I found myself in Hollow Booth.

It was a dip in the land, with about an acre of perfectly level ground at the bottom, surrounded by a steep declivity; steps cut in the earth on each side, and grass-sodded, rendered the descent easy.

I leaned against a tree, lighted my pipe, and took a good view of the place.

The snow had fallen but lightly here, and I could easily see that the plot of level ground was covered with grass. Along the opposite side was a streamlet that issued from a spring in the slope. At the far end were two great elms, and behind and under them, filling up one third of the level ground, were two enormous rocks standing in a line with each other, at a distance of about twelve feet apart.

Looking closely, I saw that the open space between them was covered with a good thatch roof; then I caught sight of a chimney and a thin streak of blue smoke curling up among the branches of the elms. Then I knew that I was looking at the dwelling-place of the White Magician.

It was with a curious sensation that I descended the steps and walked slowly towards the rocks.

Thirty feet away, and just as I was noticing that there was a wooden front to the house of rock, with a door and a window, I halted; for the Hermit himself suddenly issued from his den. Slamming the door behind him, he advanced a few steps, and shook his staff at me in an attitude of menace. He looked fierce and weird.

"Get you gone!" he cried hoarsely; but I stood my ground.

"What want you? Get you gone!" he repeated, with a threatening demonstration.

"I did not know you were such an old heathen, my friend, or I would have seen you at Timbuctoo before I had paid you a morning visit. Good-morning. I'll go and pay a visit to the King of the Cannibal Islands, who will cut you out in manners any day," I answered, turning on my heel.

The truth is, I thought the old fellow was a bit dangerous, and I had no ambition to have a cracked skull. I thought I heard him chuckle ere he called out, "Hey, stop there!"

I glanced back over my shoulder—he was coming after me! Should I run? Anyway, I am happy to say I did not run. I humoured him and faced round.

"What did you come here for, eh?" he demanded, striking his staff furiously on the ground.

A thousand answers flashed through my mind in a moment of time. What I actually said to him was: "*I came to discuss mummies with you!*"

As certain fish will rise like a flash to an artificial minnow on a trolling-line, so the Hermit seized upon my words with strange avidity.

"Mummies! What know you of mummies?" he demanded, with a quick change of manner.

"Now, the truth was, I knew precious little of those interesting fossils. At that time I had not even seen a genuine mummy, though I had seen several bogus ones. I began seriously to regret the wanton humour that had led me to introduce the subject. I thought it wiser, however, not to back down too quickly. So I answered :

"Not very much myself, but I have a friend with a craze on the subject. And having heard of your wisdom, venerable father, it struck me that you might be well posted and able to give me a point or two. I should like to take my brilliant friend down a peg or so."

"I fear you are a frivolous young man, given to trifling with great subjects. Though you don't look so," he added, giving me a long and keen glance with his large, melancholy grey eyes.

"Thank you," I answered with returning courage.

"Come with me," he said, and I followed him. The old fox—venerable father, I mean—conducted me, not into his den, which I much desired to see, but round one of the rocks, where there was a seat large enough for two hollowed out in the stone. He bade me sit down beside him, and I obeyed.

"You were right, young man, in thinking that I could tell you something about the great, the ancient and quite sacred art of embalming," said he. "What would you know?"

I felt floored, and tried hard to look grave and wise, meanwhile battering my brains to recollect some fact connected with ancient embalming on which to hang a question. Up from the deep seas of memory I hauled a solitary fact at last. It was a perfect god-send—nothing less than Cedar Oil! Clearing my throat, I said :

"I should like to know what amount of private commission a flourishing firm of Theban oil merchants, say of the Seventeenth Dynasty, would be likely to pay a priest-surgeon with a good practice for using their best quality of Cedar Oil?"

For some moments the Hermit made no answer, and I began to wonder if he was considering the neatest way of murdering me. At last, to my infinite relief, he looked up from the ground. "I like your question, young man," he said. "It exhibits an active imagination which is very valuable in historical research. Most antiquarians are without an atom of it. But I cannot answer you!"

Then he began a long and learned and most fantastical monologue on the art of mummification as practised among ancient and modern nations. He seemed to have the whole thing at his tongue's end, and rolled it off by the yard in a sort of chant. I listened as one in a dream, fascinated yet bewildered, as he intoned his tale of quaint and curious learning. He chanted Egypt, Greece, Rome, Dynasties innumerable, Memphis, Thebes, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Porphyry, Tacitus, Statius, Gannal, Ruysch, Champollion—Figeac, Hunter, the Peruvians, the Guanches, and goodness knows who and what besides.

At length he paused, and I thought the wonderful old man had run himself dry. I was framing in my mind a Cyclopean compliment equal to the occasion, when he broke out again, in a lower but more impassioned strain, as follows :

"There is no secret of the ancients that may not be surprised, no invention that may not be discovered, no lost art that may not be found. If they with their rude instruments did fine work, we with our delicate instruments may do finer. Shall I have travelled throughout the world, seeking everywhere and among all peoples, savage and civilised, for one little fact, and not have found it? Nay, but I found it waiting my arrival in America, in Africa and in Asia. The Memphite mummy grew black and brittle; the Theban, yellow and ghastly; the Peruvian, brown and hideous. None of these were of perfect art. With perfect art, the joints shall remain flexible, the flesh firm, the features as in life, unchanged, the colour of the face and body natural, as of one asleep. A thousand years shall be as one day to the sweet fresh mummy of perfect art. And of that art there is but one master in the whole world, and—I am he!"

A very pretty climax, I thought; but I was uneasy. There was a ring in the Hermit's voice and glare in his eyes which I did not quite relish. They smacked of the delirious. Yet he was not mad, except in a monomaniacal sense; but in that sense, I wrote him down mad as a March hare.

I lost no time in winding up the conversation, and bringing the interview to an end; and when, a little later, I took my leave, it was with the determination never again to intrude upon the Hermit's privacy.

I remembered Lennier's injunction, and said nothing about my visit to Hollow Booth. With something of disappointment, not to say disgust, I put the White Magician out of my mind, and returned to the more fruitful subject of the ghost.

I flattered myself that I was the victim of no delusion on the subject, and could approach it with the method of science and in the spirit of philosophy. This sense of dignity and mental elevation was very sweet to me, especially on the first night when I stole out from the Grange, after the household had retired for the night, and took my lonely way to the churchyard.

I did this on two successive nights without learning anything, except perhaps the weakness of my nerves. Yet that I continued my vigils, notwithstanding some very singular sensations, is a note of evidence in favour of my moral courage.

The third night was frosty and moonless, but the sky was throbbing with innumerable stars; the wind came and went in sharp gusts, making the branches creak, and breaking the weird silence with strange moanings and other notes of a dim and unhappy life. I sat in my favourite seat, enveloped in darkness, and, much more comfortable, my fur-lined coat.

I think I must have fallen asleep, for I suddenly started, and, looking instinctively towards the northern doorway, I saw something that made my heart stand still.

A tall, dark figure, with head-gear resembling a dunce's cap, was distinctly visible in the starlight close to the doorway. It stood for a moment, and then suddenly disappeared.

I sprang to my feet, and rushed across the intervening space to the doorway. I tried to open the door, but it would not yield; I examined the ground carefully, but found no trace of footmarks; I put my ear to the door and listened, but all was silent as death.

I went home and to bed.

The next night—such is the enchanting variability of our climate—was wet, cloudy, dark as a bog: fur-lined coat gave place to mackintosh. My favourite seat would have been as bad as a shower-bath, and the darkness of the night would have prevented my seeing so far as the doorway; so I chose a broad, flat tombstone resting on four stone pillars that was opposite the doorway, and, creeping under, lay at full length and waited.

I was anything but comfortable. The rain came down in torrents, and the water ran in rivulets under my body, to collect into a small lake immediately under my knees. I should have given up the thing as a bad job for that night, had I not recollected that wandering spirits were notoriously partial to the watery element.

I lay on, while the lake in the region of my knees gradually swelled itself into an inland sea. I was heaving the log with my forefinger, when a slight sound arrested my attention.

I peered into the darkness for some moments without seeing anything; then, a few feet from the doorway, there rose, as from out of the ground, a colossal figure in black. It moved to the doorway—I was positive I heard a noise like a click—and seemed to melt into the blackness of the door.

I crawled out, and made for the doorway. Of course, it was fastened. I spent some time doing a number of foolish things, until an owl began to hoot me, as I thought, in mockery.

It became a question what I should do next. Common-sense suggested bed by all means; but scientific curiosity urged me to stay on, if need be till day-dawn, in the vague hope of getting another and a better view of the mysterious figure.

I was decidedly averse to taking up my old position under the tombstone, and was at no little loss where to bestow myself. I finally settled upon a yew tree that grew close to the church, about ten or a dozen yards from the doorway, nearer the wood. In this I ensconced myself as comfortably as I could, and prepared to pass the remainder of the night there.

I had small hope of seeing the figure in black again that night. It was close upon two o'clock, and I had been tree'd considerably over an hour, with my eyes riveted upon the doorway. I was almost

afraid to blink, for fear of missing something. It had ceased raining, and a few stars were visible.

All at once, without the slightest audible noise, the sable, awesome figure was dimly visible, standing in front of the doorway.

Presently it moved to the wall of the church, a short distance from the door, and I saw it stretch out its hand, apparently to touch the wall. Then, to my horror, it moved forward in the direction of the tree in which I was concealed. Did it know I was there? Beads of cold sweat were upon my face; I clutched a stout branch with both hands. On stalked the figure, upright, gigantic in stature, wearing what looked like a black robe, with long pointed shoes, the ends of which were fastened to its girdle, and a great funnel cap upon its head. At the distance of a dozen feet or so, its footsteps were distinctly audible. Not firm and heavy as became its stature and gait, but soft and light as a young girl's careful tread. The figure passed the tree just on the edge of its dark shadow. I saw its face, and gave a great start.

It was the Hermit of Hollow Booth!

He passed on, and I watched him until he entered the wood and was lost to view.

When once he had disappeared, I found difficulty in believing that my eyes had not deceived me. What had become of his long white locks and beard; his tremulous gait, and stoop? Was all this part of the trick? What was his motive? What mystery lurked behind that old, worm-eaten door?

It was something to have found out that I was dealing with actual flesh and blood, and yet it complicated matters seriously. There was no knowing what tragedy was hidden behind this elaborate masquerade of eccentricity.

I determined, however, that I would find out. I debated with myself whether I should get Lennier to join me. I decided to go through as I had begun, single-handed.

Dropping to the ground, I made for the spot where I had seen the Hermit stretch out his hand, and my attention was attracted to a stone gargoyle, representing an open-mouthed demon.

As I gazed at the grinning monstrosity, a sinister and almost irreligious caricature of the human face divine, an exciting idea entered my mind. I stood on tip-toe and reached up, but I failed to reach the gargoyle by some inches. I looked about for something to stand on, and finally got a large stone from the side of the road. Mounting this, I was enabled to thrust my hand into the demon's mouth. There was a hollow in the lower jaw, and as my fingers slipped into this they touched something cold. My fingers clutched it. I did not wait to examine it, but bounded to the door. There was a soft click, and the door swung noiselessly open. I had found the key!

II.

It was the evening of Christmas Day, a red-letter day in my life; for that very morning I had pleaded my suit successfully with the divine Dorothea, and had won from her sweet lips a confession of her regard for me.

After dinner Lennier and I repaired to the smoking-room, where in the course of time we were joined by the ladies.

I do not remember how it came about, but the topic of conversation was ghosts, and eventually the proposition was made that we should each tell a story in turn. The divine Dorothea, a creature of excellent imagination and quaint fancy, led off with a blood-curdling narrative; an effort that reflected great credit on her inventive faculty, as she deluded us all into the belief that it was a "true tale." Doubtless it was, in an oblique sense.

Lennier followed next, and was in turn succeeded by his lady. It was getting late when my turn arrived.

"Now, Treherne, don't pile up the horrible too much. Remember, the ladies' nerves are not like your own—of steel," remarked Lennier; but the ladies protested that they would give anything to feel a genuine shiver of horror just for once.

"Well, I am not going to tell a story at all," I said, coolly. Then added: "But if you like, I will show you a ghost worth looking at."

"Hallo, what's up now?" enquired Lennier, with an uneasy laugh; while the ladies exclaimed, "Yes, yes, show us the ghost!"

"You will have to come with me to the Priory then; and we must not lose much time either," I said, looking at my watch.

"He is joking," remarked Mrs. Lennier, in a disappointed tone.

"Oh, Dick, you are not, are you?" cried the divine Dorothea, gently touching my arm with the tips of her fingers, and looking reproachfully into my eyes.

"Never more serious in my life. If you care to come, I will show you something worth seeing!"

"The mediæval monster of fifty years ago, eh?" sniffed Lennier, contemptuously.

"Yes; and something else too, if you care for it," I said, being quite superior to any amount of sceptical sarcasm.

Lennier made a brave fight against what he called "the madness of the thing;" but upon the spindle side there were dexterity and tact, and the result goes without saying.

At half past twelve, we were all four in the churchyard, crouching behind a couple of tomb-stones that stood side by side, in good view of the now famous doorway. The divine Dorothea and I had one of the stones to ourselves, and, as a series of observations had led me to conclude that the sable figure would not show himself till after one o'clock, I began to devote myself to making some silent experiments in the art of courtship.

I forgot the ghost altogether. It was a clear frosty night ; frosty, but gloriously warm—judging from my own temperature. Moreover, the divine Dorothea herself was some distance from the freezing point ; though I heard Lennier mutter something about “awfully cold.”

Presently, by chance, I peered round the stone—there was the figure in black, coolly stalking away from us, and already nearing the margin of the wood !

“Look ! look ! be quick !”

They obeyed, following the direction of my finger. “Ho, ho, ho,” they cried, in startled tones, as they gazed at the gigantic figure in the dim distance. When it had disappeared in the wood, I said :

“We almost lost him that time. We must have been asleep. We ought to have seen him come through the doorway. What do you think of him, Lennier ?”

“Think ? I’ve too much feeling to think. What on earth does it mean ?” he answered in a strange tone.

“It means that there are more things in heaven and earth, etc.,” I replied, thinking that a pin thrust between the joints of his armour might do him good.

“So it seems ; but what do you make of it ?”

“We will discuss that at another time. I want to take you through the doorway yonder !”

“Is it wise ?” objected Lennier, and I noticed the ladies were ominously silent ; only the divine Dorothea clutched my arm nervously.

“Well, of course, if you are all afraid to go, there is nothing further to be done. We had better go back home,” I said.

“Afraid ! I am perfectly ready and willing if the ladies are. Indeed, I think we may as well go through with it now we are here,” rejoined Lennier.

The ladies put on a brave face and assented.

So out we stepped from our hiding-place and moved towards the door. I got the key from the mouth of the gargoyle, and opening the door, we all passed through. First closing the door, I brought out of my pocket, and lighted, a large wax taper ; then I put myself at the head of the party, and they followed me.

Turning to the left, we went along a narrow passage formed of the outer-wall and an interior wall of brick. At the end of the passage a large opening had been made through the brick wall ; through this we passed into a small, circular chamber and down a flight of stone steps into the vault under the chancel where the body of the murdered man had been found. I was drawing attention to this fact, when Lennier said :

“For goodness’ sake, Treherne, shut up ! The sooner we are out of here the better !”

Thus admonished, I led the way to a corner of the vault where was a huge recess in the wall, black as night. The divine Dorothea started back.

"Don't be nervous ; there are some steps in there. We are going to have a good climb. It leads up nearly to the top of the tower," I said, moving forward.

The stairway was spiral, unlighted by any window from top to bottom, and gave access to a large square room, the existence of which was unguessed by anyone in Pepyswick ; I subsequently discovered the position of the room to be immediately above the belfry. The ascent was slow and tedious. I stood at the top of the steps holding the taper in my hand, while the ladies and Lennier passed me, and stood in a group on the threshold of the unlighted room.

I took a step forward into the room ; and as I did so, a sudden whiff of air blew out the taper, leaving us all in total darkness.

The ladies gave a little scream ; Lennier snorted nervously—I mean angrily. I am afraid I laughed.

"It's all right. I have plenty of matches, and will soon have a light. There is nothing in the room to be afraid of ; only a couple of chairs, a table, a little camp bedstead, and a huge old coffer with a wonderful lock, which must have been put in when the room was built. Here, hold the candle, Lennier, while I strike a light."

"Better shut the door, I fancy," said Lennier, as our hands met in the darkness. This I did, and then I lit the taper, and taking hold of it, held it aloft.

For a couple of seconds there was complete silence ; then there broke from each of us a cry of startled amazement.

On a small round table in the middle of the room were placed wines and fruits and cakes ; and at the table sat a middle-aged lady of striking loveliness, arrayed in amber silk and laces, and decked with jewels.

We stood spell-bound, expecting every instant that she would raise her drooped eyelids and address us. But she sat there, motionless, as one lost in deep meditation. And as we gazed, slowly and simultaneously there crept over us a strange, cold horror. Her stillness was the stillness of death. And yet, since the world began, death never wore such a sweet look of life.

Then I remembered the Hermit's Mummy of Perfect Art !

I stepped forward and touched her lovely right hand, which rested upon the table. The flesh was soft as living flesh, and white and pink, but it was cold as stone. There was no longer any doubt ; it was the Mummy of Perfect Art.

Turning to my companions, who were a great deal more corpse-like than the lady at the table, I said :

"This is a mummy ; and I knew nothing of its existence, or I would never have ventured to bring you here. I had found out that the ghost of Pepyswick was none other than the Hermit of Hollow Booth, and that he passed much of his time here. Why he did so was a mystery to me, but I partly see through it now. He is, I know, a monomaniac on mummies, and he evidently spends his

time in company with this beautiful specimen of his art. I saw nothing of her when I was here a week ago ; I fancy he must keep her in the old locker there. Though why she is out to-night, I don't understand. What do you think of it ?" I said, addressing Lennier.

" I don't know," he answered, coming forward.

With him advanced the ladies, pale, trembling, yet curious. But the mummy was so life-like and so exceedingly lovely, that it was impossible to contemplate it closely without feeling something of admiration.

" Perhaps she was his wife," suggested the divine Dorothea, softly ; and, somehow, the suggestion worked like a veil of tender sentiment, covering a grim eccentricity with the pathos of human passion and love.

In less than a year, the Hermit was suddenly missing from Hollow Booth, and Lennier made a confidential communication to the authorities. Upon search being made in the tower, the lifeless body of the Hermit was found lying beside that of the beautiful mummy. They were buried together in Pepyswick churchyard, and the secret of the tower never passed outside official circles. With the identification of the Hermit himself, a singular case of disappearance, which had baffled the police for years, was set at rest.



SPARED.

THE shadow of a presence dread
Has vanished from the room !
The terror of the night has fled,
Its anguish and its gloom.
The dove had spread its wings for flight,
But on a mother's breast
Are folded now those pinions white
In deep and thankful rest.
The flower that bent beneath the storm
Now lifts its head anew,
And love's own warmth enfolds its form
In sunshine and in dew.
And gladness fills the watchers wan
Who weary vigils shared—
The halls will ring with joy anon—
The little one is spared !

CLARA THWAITES.

THE MISSES LOWMAN.

IN these days, when interest and enquiry are directed towards abnormal mental phenomena, instead of the mere incredulity which most of us can remember so well, a new danger arises to beset any rational investigation into this fascinating field. We are apt to hear only those stories of prescient impression which are rounded off artistically, generally to an end of calamity or death. The consequence is that the healthier minds are repelled from the whole subject, and it is relegated to the gloomy and morbid. Others, wholesomely refusing "to meet trouble half way," strive to resist any impression that passes upon them, feeling only that it probably "bodes no good."

If anyone is inclined to question my statement, let him moot the matter of thought-reading, dreams, etc., in the first little neighbourly assembly in which he joins. If his friends know no more of mental phenomena than is to be gathered from newspapers, general conversation, etc., he will find they instantly divide into two parties. The dreamy, sickly and fanciful of the group are sure "there is something in it," and each will produce his little tale of foreboding or warning. The bright, healthy and practical will say "there is very little in it, and what there is is mere disease, to be repressed in silence and got rid of as soon as possible."

This is not the way in which unknown facts can be ever rightly weighed and correlated. If we leave the investigation of mental phenomena to weak, foreboding minds, it is only the mental phenomena of weakness and fear that can ever come to light.

It has often seemed to those who have looked with some care into the strange facts of insight and foresight which life occasionally throws up to the surface, that few are so interesting as those which remain inexplicable: the stories which have no artistic end: and which seem to reveal the existence of a law generally working in secret, but always operative, without any stimulus from fear, sorrow, love or emotional disturbance of any kind.

I think I will try to tell one such story now. It is an experience of my own girlhood. It is necessary, therefore, that I should strive to set myself and my surroundings before my reader.

I was the youngest of our family; and with many years intervening between myself and the sister next me in age, I was the constant companion of my eldest sister, a cheerful and intensely matter-of-fact person. My favoured friend in those days was a boy-cousin about two years my senior, and naturally at his then age, a very unromantic individual, who delivered his opinions and advice in an uncompromising, brotherly fashion.

It can be readily understood that in these circumstances, though I was not at all a solitary child, yet I had an interior life which was solitary. I was in the habit of weaving long stories in my own mind, which I carried on for days together, and whose outward expression was never in manuscript, but in strange caricature-like drawings which I did, in rows with lines between, after the style of Egyptian hieroglyphics.

My home was in the heart of London, in the centre of interests of every kind : historical, political, picturesque and tragic. Access to the country was not as easy then as now, and I saw very little of it, but always walked in the parks for two or three hours every day. I was never out of doors without an attendant of some kind, my eldest sister being my usual companion. I was never taken to the theatre, or indulged in late hours either of night or morning. I had plenty of interesting books of every kind ; but the only "novel" proper which I had read was "*The Heart of Midlothian*," which I had found, without title-page or author's name, in the house of a relative's old servant, and of which I had eagerly devoured every word, quite undaunted even by the legal dryness of Mr. Saddletrée.

I received my education at a morning school for girls. Education then was a simpler thing than it is now ; but in organisation, discipline, etc., either that school must have been superior to its contemporaries, or the modern improvements on these lines need not be boasted of ; for in them I have never seen it surpassed—scarcely equalled.

I got on well with all my teachers ; was a great favourite with two of them. My pet subjects were drawing and history, and I gained many prizes. I generally had one favoured associate ; but my school attachments never rose to the dignity of friendship ; I fear I held them rather loosely. I was on good terms with all my school-fellows, but held a little aloof from them. We had not many interests in common. My home life was of a sterner pattern than most of theirs, and I cared little for the parties and the dressing in which they took delight. I was a little sharp-tempered and "difficult," inclined to take my own way, and to persist in it, perhaps not always pleasantly.

So much for myself and for the influence about me.

The house in which the school was held was within a few doors of my own home. It was a fine old mansion, which had belonged to very grand folk in the reign of Charles II., and more recently had been occupied by a fashionable club of the faster kind, where for purposes of gaming, duelling, and other illicit practices, sundry secret doors, false floors, etc., had been introduced into its construction. These days, however, had passed away long before my birth, and for years it had been a high class ladies' school, its wicked old contrivances left useless and innocent.

But its generally dignified arrangements remained useful. Its white stone staircase needed no carpet. Its well-separated rooms prevented any class, even a singing one, from disturbing its neighbours.

Its great entrance hall, with its three divisions, planned probably for the purpose of securing delay when desirable, was still specially useful. The first was a mere lobby, on to which the outer doors stood open during school hours. Glass doors gave admission to the second hall, which was furnished with forms for the convenience of servants waiting to escort their young ladies. The doors of the third, or inner hall, were kept clasped and guarded by the school-room maid, and it was furnished as a dressing-room, with looking glass, hanging pegs, etc.

I have dwelt on the description of the hall, because it is the scenery of this story of mine—which is no story at all, in its end.

Let me add that in those days school life was divided by "quarters," not "terms," and that new scholars were entered very rarely except at these quarters.

Well, I was about twelve years of age. It was the middle of a quarter; I think about the end of October; a time at which there was no excitement about examinations, prizes, or school arrivals or partings. I had lived through my usual quiet, fully-occupied day, and had gone to bed at my regular hour. Then I had a dream.

I may pause here to say that all my life I have been what I may venture to call a rather rational dreamer. I have scarcely ever dreamed of horrors or of specially exciting events of any kind, but of life very much like that in which I have lived by day. I remember of these dreams seldom more than a generally pleasant impression. When I can recall farther, they are usually dramatically correct, and with humorous or poetic point, and somewhat to the purpose of my life at the time. I will not deny that I have been soothed and helped by dreams. But it is very seldom indeed that I can recall more than generally pleasant impressions.

On this occasion I dreamed that I was, as usual, walking to school—this was the only out-door excursion I ever made alone—the school being, as I have said, separated by only twelve or thirteen houses from my home. In front of me I saw two tall young girls, clad in the deepest mourning, and accompanied by an elderly gentleman also in deep mourning. (Note *that* detail.) Of the girls I noticed nothing but their specially sombre attire and somewhat lanky figures. But as I passed them the gentleman turned and spoke to me, and I saw that he had fine high features and a long grey beard. He continued speaking to me till we reached the school door. There the girls passed in silently, and as if quite unaware of the presence of the old gentleman or myself. I saw them walk through the second division, but we lingered in the outer lobby. He spoke with much emphasis and great gesticulation. Whether or not I seemed to him to respond I cannot say, but it was *as if I heard nothing*. The dream ended here; or at least as far as my memory was concerned. Whether I woke at this juncture or the dream faded off in mist, as dreams sometimes do, I cannot recall.

Next morning I went to school as usual, and going straight up into

the school-room saw, on seats facing the door, the two heroines of my dream: the tall, pale, sable-clad girls! It is odd that I can remember distinctly that I was not greatly surprised or impressed; the fact being that such "coincidences" as this were not uncommon to me at that time. I thought them "coincidences" and nothing more, and should never have dreamed of mentioning them to anyone but my eldest sister, who would have undoubtedly set them down as such.

If more had not followed, I should no doubt have forgotten all about this, though I turned the matter over in my mind, with a half laugh. "What a muddle these things are!" I thought. "Why did I dream about these girls and an old gentleman, and then encounter the girls, but no old gentleman? Where is he?"

We will call the girls the Misses Lowman (I do not give the right name). They and I sat in different divisions and were in separate classes, and there was no communication whatever between us, except a formal bow, if we chanced to meet out of school-hours in the street. So weeks passed by.

I was at that time receiving some special instruction in drawing, and as no other pupil happened to be attending the same class, I received my instruction alone at the end of a desk in the big school-room, the master bending over me, and the rest of the scholastic work going on as usual. Suddenly a teacher had occasion to call out in a very audible voice: "The Misses Lowman!"

My drawing master paused and looked round, as the two tall, black-robed girls walked up the school-room in obedience to this summons.

Then bending over me, he asked in a whisper:

"Do you know if those young ladies live in Bridge Street?"

"I do not know," I said; "but I have seen them once or twice walking in that direction."

"Do you know if they are in mourning for their father?" he enquired.

"I do not know," I replied again, this time with a little interest.

"I used to know a little of old Mr. Lowman of Bridge Street," he said, rather sadly. "I believe he died very suddenly. I think these must be his daughters: they have something of his look. I always thought he would have made a grand study: he was a fine-looking old man, with noble features and a long grey beard."

There was the old gentleman of my dream! If these were the Misses Lowman of Bridge Street, then in my sleep I had seen the dead father beside the living daughters.

A few well-directed questions asked of the school-room maid elicited that the young ladies did belong to the Bridge Street family, and were in mourning for their father.

At this point, when I have been telling my story (for I have often told it), my auditors have all exclaimed:

"And what did you do then?"

"What came of it?"

"Did you prove to be great friends—or bitter enemies?"

"Did your lives come into collision at any subsequent time?"

I have had to reply simply and categorically:

"All I did was to tell the incident to my eldest sister and a senior school-fellow. They did not as usual say it was 'a chance;' they said it was 'queer.'"

"Nothing came of it."

"To the best of my recollection, I never in all my life exchanged one word with the Misses Lowman."

"I do not know what became of them. I left school before they did, and never heard of them afterwards."

To another enquiry, whether my mysterious dream did not tend to attract me towards them, as to someone between whom and myself a hidden link existed, I must always answer: "No, I think it had a somewhat opposite effect. I rather shrank from them. Perhaps I should not have felt thus had I been otherwise attracted, but I was not. The Misses Lowman seemed cold and taciturn; the two sisters held much together and sought no acquaintance among their school-fellows."

And when I have answered all these questions, the next remark is:

"It's a pity something did not happen! The incident would work capitally into a story."

So it would. And of such stuff are stories made. But perhaps it is only fair that the public should sometimes see the raw material and learn to understand that the mysterious element which seems to surround our lives does not touch them only at their tragic points.

Their next temptation will be to smile at the apparently puerile and purposeless phenomena which will be, necessarily, often presented for their consideration. Let them remember, however, that while from the earliest ages the lightning flash had been known as an irresistible power of terror and destruction, it required a series of seemingly trivial observations on frogs, and minute experiments with Leyden jars, before electricity was recognised as a force capable of being a useful servant of human will, and a co-operator in human work.



ONE CHRISTMAS EVE.

'Tis Christmas Eve, and the snow is falling,

In fairy flakes to the frozen ground—
Like spirit voices the bells are calling,
A world of joy in their mellow sound !
Down in the heart of the busy city,
By the feeble light of one taper dim,
A voice to waken the sigh of pity
Is faintly singing a Christmas hymn.

No Christmas log on the hearth is burning,
Though winds blow chill and the hour is late—
But young eyes watch, with a wistful yearning,
A few red sparks in a narrow grate !
Through a mullioned window the moonlight stealing,
A halo sheds round one broken chair—
Where two young forms like cherubs kneeling,
Are softly lisping their evening prayer.

The mother sings while her babe is sleeping,
Although the chamber is bare and cold ;
Above her treasure a fond watch keeping,
As " Mary " watched in the days of old.
She knows not why, but her heart rejoices,
Her life's dull burden hath grown so light,
And, oh, she hears in her children's voices
A ring of comfort and hope to-night.

" Poor mother's eyes have grown dim with sorrow,
Thou sweet Child Jesus," the children pray :
" The widow's home will be sad to-morrow—
Oh, send ' good tidings ' for Christmas Day."
Ah, now that mother is sadly weeping,
But God hath answered the simple prayer,
For *someone* covered with snow is leaping
In eager haste up the creaking stair.

" Alas ! " she sighs, while her tears are flowing,
" Can the dead return to this heart of mine ? "
(On the narrow threshold a face is glowing,
Two brave blue eyes through the shadows shine)
" For evermore must my life be lonely,
Since he is lost whom I loved the best ! "
The stranger pauses one moment only—
Then folds her close to his throbbing breast.

In loving accents her name is spoken,
In silent rapture she clasps his neck :
" Dear heart ! " he whispers, " your last love token
Hath saved your Jack from the cruel wreck ! "
He draws from his bosom, with deep emotion,
One silken lock of a baby's hair ;
In calm and storm, on the briny ocean,
By day and night, hath it nestled there.

The light of joy in their sweet eyes gleaming,
In childish wonder the children stand—
Through the mullioned window the moonlight beaming,
Bathes in soft glory that happy band !
And now the father, each child caressing,
The wondrous tale of God's mercy tells :
And, while they listen, His loving blessing
Is wafted in on the Christmas bells.

FANNY FORRESTER.

ONE WOMAN'S LOVE.

THEY stood together in the gloaming by the miniature cascade near the end of the garden: a tall, dark-eyed, resolute-looking, handsome man of twenty-five or so, and beside him a small woman, clad in a dress of some soft, neutral tint, with a knot of crimson flowers on her bosom, and a trailing spray of the same velvety blooms in her hair. A small woman, and not pretty; at least there were few who would have called her so; though her eyes were of the clearest and deepest blue, and her brown hair was soft and abundant. The young man passed his hand over it with a caressing touch; and, looking into his eyes, you would know that the pale little face, perfectly colourless save for the fine scarlet curve of the lips, was to him the fairest and dearest face in all the world.

She nestled to his side when he put his arm about her, but neither of them spoke, though the same thought was in the mind of both; the thought that they might never again stand together thus and there—might never more meet on earth. For he, William Rutherford, must depart with his regiment that night. The Canoop County Rangers were to take the boat at midnight for Springfield, there to be mustered into the service, and armed and equipped, preparatory to entering the field.

Mr. Rutherford was first lieutenant of the company; a man whom nearly everyone liked. "So true and upright," people said; "so steady and firm of purpose; always succeeded in what he undertook." True and upright he certainly was. Firm and steady of purpose, too, with a quiet persistency of character that seemed to overcome or set aside all obstacles that chanced to arise in any course he saw fit to mark out for himself. Not at all a brilliant man in society, but courteous in his manners to everyone, and always a gentleman; yet more of a favourite with men than with women. A hard worker, a clear thinker, a man who could make the most of his opportunities; and, best of all, a tender son to the widowed mother whose counsellor and supporter he had been since early boyhood.

There were many in that quiet country neighbourhood—and a greater contrast cannot well lie between these unsophisticated, homely neighbourhoods of America and our artificial ones over here—who remembered how a pale-faced, delicate woman, clad in the deepest mourning, had come among them years before, bringing with her a little, dark-eyed boy. Her story was soon learnt. Her husband had been master and part owner of the fine ship *Caledonia*. But, one night of darkness and tempest, the good ship and her lion-hearted commander went down together in sight of the headlands of home. Another bitter tribute to the hungry sea.

"It is the widow of good Captain Rutherford," this simple-hearted little community of Canoop said to one another, and they welcomed her amongst them and strove to make her happy. Nearly all Captain Rutherford's property had been invested in his ship; very little was left for his tenderly-reared wife and petted boy. Pursuing the advice of friends, Mrs. Rutherford had come to this far-away inland place of Canoop, where provisions and houses were cheap and customs were primitive; there to make the best of her small income. She took upon lease a pretty house with a few acres of land attached to it; and here she lived and flourished.

Yet Canoop wondered how she did it; and dressed well though simply, and brought up her idolised boy as he should be—a well-educated man and a gentleman. But William repaid her amply for all her care. As soon as he came down from college he took the land under his own management, added some acres to it, was at work at it early and late and spared his mother trouble; and all things prospered with him. When he was twenty-one years of age he had saved enough money to purchase the house and the land, and it became their own.

In a little time from this William Rutherford had made the place beautiful. He planted a shrubbery, and made a small rose-garden, and trained the grape-vine over the walls of the house, and trimmed the dwarf-pines, and grew more cedars. All Canoop said it was a lovely little estate now, the most flourishing of all around.

So, when a family named Benson came from Ohio, and took on lease a place, large and rambling, near by, and settled down on it, they made more of the Rutherfords than of the other neighbours. Mr. Benson had been very well off, but he was an extravagant man, and spent more than he could afford. His wife sighed, and would remonstrate with him in private—uselessly. William Rutherford grew intimate at the Bensons'. He fell into the habit of riding and walking with the only daughter, Clare, a sweet, gentle, thoughtful girl, but not possessing any great beauty. The small world, looking on the intimacy of the young people, nodded to one another and laughed. Everyone felt pretty sure how it would end. Everyone, that is, but the suitor himself. He was not a vain man, and, as I have said, had always been more of a favourite with men than with women. No one, not even his mother, guessed what a hold this girl had gained on his heart; how her voice and smile, or the most careless touch of her dainty finger, thrilled him through and through. It was only the old, old story over again. The story that men and women have been learning from the day of Eden. You can guess what the end was in this case. Was it likely that the man who seemed always to succeed in what he undertook would fail now?

There ensued no open engagement between them, for William Rutherford did not consider his own position sufficiently assured to justify his speaking to Mr. Benson. He was again saving up money,

and had been ever since he bought the little farm, and he meant to take another for himself, perhaps to purchase one.

"I will go out, William," his mother said to him one day, seeing him in deep thought and divining what problem lay in his heart. "This is your own place, my dear, and it is right that you should occupy it. A little cottage will do for me."

William, looking at her in surprise, laughed the words off. "My place, did you say, mother, this? That it never has been, and never will be while you live. It was for you I bought it, and yours it will always be."

"But what about you and Clare, William? You will want a home."

"All very premature, that, mother mine," he answered, laughing again. "Time enough yet. We have life before us."

So he spoke not to Clare's parents; nor, indeed, much to Clare herself. But she knew that his whole love was hers, and in the deep happiness of his daily companionship, she would have asked no better than to wait for ever.

But troubles will come to destroy the sweetest dream. While many a remote place in the United States was living in as great security as Canoop, foreseeing no cloud likely to disturb its sleepy peace, there broke out that dreadful civil war between the North and the South. Upon some parts of America the news fell as a thunderbolt.

Numbers of young men, jealous for their own national honour, hurried forth in hot haste to join the army. John Benson was one, Mr. Benson's eldest son. The young fellow, sent to graduate for the bar, was at home just then on a visit; he lost not a moment in quitting Canoop, to enrol himself in the ranks. A little later Canoop itself formed a company; most of its younger men joined it. No enthusiasm takes hold of the mind or is so catching as a martial one.

It is said that "the world worships success;" and probably it was more for this reason than because he was liked, that the company chose William Rutherford as their First Lieutenant. As for himself, he liked that it should be so, for he had a good deal of ambition.

He did not guess what a powerful force in his nature ambition was; the one besetting sin against which he would have to contend from his cradle to his grave. A craving for place and power had always lain within him, restrained and held in check hitherto by a nice sense of justice and honour as well as by circumstances. But what if, in the years to come, some great and sudden temptation should be brought to bear upon him, would justice and honour maintain their ascendancy then, or would he do as many another has done, sell his birthright of truth for the poor reward of place and station? He was going out with the company as First Lieutenant, but he meant to rise to a higher rank, and higher yet, if fortune favoured him. And

this was the night of departure, and he had come to Mr. Benson's to bid his love farewell.

Twilight deepened : yet still the young soldier lingered, still his arm kept its place about the girl's waist. Their hearts were too full for speech. A whip-poor-will near by struck up its mournful cry, and the stars came out one by one.

William Rutherford looked up and saw them.

"It is time for me to go," he sighed, and led her slowly through the winding paths towards the garden gate. There they lingered again. It was so hard to part !

"Will my little girl often think of me when I am far away ?"

He could feel her trembling in his embrace, but no tears came. She kept them back till he should have gone : for she did not want to dishearten him.

He kissed her fondly, holding her face to his. His tone was full of anguish.

"Clare !—won't you give me one kiss ? just one ! It may be the last—and the first—you will ever give me in this world."

She trembled more and more, with the nervousness born of feelings that are too sacred and deep for utterance : but, with her small hand lifted to touch his shoulder, she raised her face higher and gave the timid kiss. He answered it fervently.

"Good-bye, Clare ! My little girl ! My promised wife ! May God bless and keep my darling for ever and for ever !"

And then the close embrace was relaxed, and he turned abruptly away.

She watched him until the last faint outline of his figure was lost among the deepening shadows. Then she walked slowly to the house and sat down upon one of the side benches of the large porch, shaded without by its vine tendrils. He was gone, and she was free to weep now if she listed.

Clare shivered. The night seemed to have grown chilly all at once. Rising, she fetched a shawl that hung just inside the house, wrapped it about her shoulders, and sat down again. Mrs. Benson, chancing to see her, said supper was ready ; but Clare replied that she did not want any.

Mr. Rutherford found most of the men collected on the river bank, ready for their departure by the steamboat. It was a large crowd ; and some of them had built a rousing fire—not that its warmth was needed, for the air was sultry and oppressive ; but somehow the ruddy flame looked cheerful, and kept their spirits up. Many were there besides the young soldiers ; relatives and friends who had come down to see them off. Here and there, standing timidly back with her bonnet drawn over her face, was a woman—a wife who had ventured down to see the very last of her husband, or a mother who would fain cling to her sons. There was a good deal of noise ; some were laughing, joking and singing—most of it,

like the fire, got up for the occasion ; but as the minutes went by and the steamboat became momentarily expected, they grew silent.

Mr. Rutherford glanced over the scene as he approached. He was in command. In its strong lights and shadows and picturesque grouping it was a scene for a painter ; but he was not thinking of that just now. Suddenly, as his eyes wandered from one to another of the figures thrown into bold relief by the firelight, they rested on a boy of thirteen, whose face, lit up by the glare, bore a striking likeness to Clare Benson's. Seeing it, you would have guessed at once that he was her brother.

Lieutenant Rutherford laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You here, George? I asked for you at home to bid you good-bye, and they could not find you."

"No. I knew mamma would make a fuss if I came ; papa also perhaps if he knew it, so I slipped off and came down with Lyle Butler," replied the boy, looking up with laughing defiance.

They stood a moment looking thoughtfully about them ; then George spoke :

"Mr. Rutherford, did you know that we have heard from Jack?"

"Yes."

"The letter came by the mail that got in to-day. But it's bad news. He means to go in for the war out and out ; to fight to the end."

"Bad news, you call it, George ! Your brother John wrote it as good news. He is a brave young patriot. You will feel the same when you are his age."

"I hope the fighting will be over long before that."

"So do I, lad."

Just then was heard a puffing, rushing sound in the direction of the bend, and all eyes were turned down the river. It was not a dark night. Two lights became suddenly visible, looking in the gloom like the flaming eyes of some gigantic monster, and the expectant crowd knew it for the steamer. Instantly all was confusion ; hurried good-byes, the bustle of departure. Mr. Rutherford looked a little to his duty, issued an order or two, and then went around speaking farewell to one and another of the acquaintances he was leaving behind. He turned to George Benson last, holding the boy's hand in a long, close pressure, and his voice, as he spoke, was somewhat husky :

"Take care of Clare for me, George. If God spares me to get home again, I'm to be ——"

"I know," said the boy ; "I guessed it ever so long ago. You are to be her husband."

"And your brother and John's. Good-bye, my boy, and take care of yourself."

The steamer went puffing on her way. A melancholy clock, striking the twelve strokes of midnight, seemed to be tolling the knell of the departing company.

There were many among them who never came back again. Over

the graves of some the grass grows green in the "dark and red ground" of Kentucky; some there are who sleep well beneath the pines of Tennessee; in many a spot they lie who went out that night.

"By Southern lake and stream they sleep,
On Southern plain and Southern steep,
And in the gloom of valleys deep."

Clare was still sitting in the porch when George got home. The boy's absence had been discovered, and his father, in much wrath, had gone forth in search of him, so that everyone was still up. He sat down for a moment by his sister.

"I went down to see them off, Clare. William Rutherford told me to take care of you. He told me something else, too—can you guess?" looking at her archly. "I'm so glad, Clare; there's no fellow I like half as much as I like him."

Something of the boy's overflowing hopefulness and delight communicated itself to Clare. Sitting there alone, the most gloomy fears had haunted her; fears, not for herself, but for her brother John far away, and for another who was going to face the same danger—that other who, though a stranger to her in blood, was nearer and dearer than the closest of kindred. Listening to George's lively talk, she felt as if half the load were lifted from her mind. She was glad that William had told him. It was good to have someone that she could speak to sometimes about what lay nearest her heart—and George was a safe confidant. So they sat there, the boy of thirteen and the girl of twenty, talking of the future that lay before them both—the future which would be so bright when the war was over and Jack and William left the army and came home for good.

Weeks and months went by. The Canoop Company had found the monotony and restraint of camp life irksome at first joining the army; but gradually it became more endurable, and they fell easily and naturally into the routine of military duty; and under the care of an efficient drillmaster grew, from a band of raw recruits, into a company of well-trained soldiers, intelligent, alert, fit for active service. Thus, when the order came for a southward movement, they were ready. There was a long and exhausting march through Kentucky in the rain and snow of early winter, when many of the men, utterly unused to such exposures, fell ill and were left in hospitals along the way; months were consumed in marching from place to place, with apparently no other object in view than to "harden" the troops; then came another move towards the front, then the opening of the spring campaign, with a battle or two, and the —th Illinois took its place among the fighting regiments of the West.

Among all those who from their far northern homes traced, so far as was practicable, the movements of the regiment, none watched with more intense, absorbing interest than Clare Benson.

In the letters that came home from the soldiers in the field were details of their new and strange life ; some murmurs, many laughable incidents and odd scrapes and adventures, criticisms on the officers, some of them favourable, some unfavourable. There were a few grumblers in the company who complained of Lieutenant Rutherford. "He was too hard on his men," they said. "A martinet." A strict disciplinarian he certainly was ; but no one, not even those most disposed to find fault, could say that he exacted aught but what was right or that he did not himself share in.

There was some gossip afloat in camp also, it appeared ; and it found its way home, as a matter of course. Idle gossip about Mr. Rutherford's attentions to a pretty young widow, Mrs. Winchester, who owned a magnificent plantation and innumerable negroes in close proximity to their camp. Lyle Butler wrote all the tattle home to his mother and sister at Canoop : not exactly as though he believed there was anything in it, but laughingly.

Mrs. Winchester was sister to their colonel, Colonel Marsh, he said, who had established his own head-quarters at her house. Her husband had been a rebel (meaning a Southerner), but that was no reason why she should be one, and she was lavish in her favours to the men of her brother's command, furnishing them, through her servants, with a hundred things that they could not obtain elsewhere ; and she gave most enchanting parties at her house, to which the officers were invited. "A beautiful woman, and rich enough to tempt a less worldly man than William Rutherford," concluded Lyle's letter.

The report did not trouble Clare. When people talked of it she only smiled. *She* knew who it was that William Rutherford loved ; and who it was that, all things being well, he would come home to marry.

Again the time went on. There came more weeks and months of waiting, more suspense ; but little news, certain or uncertain. The mails did not come regularly ; and when they came, often brought no letters from the seat of war. One item of news Canoop did hear : that Lieutenant Rutherford had obtained a step in rank and gained his company.

Some little time before this, a rumour arose in Canoop that the Bensons were about to quit the place and settle upon some property they owned in a different State. It was quite true, Mrs. Benson said when questioned : her husband was already gone forward to see into his affairs there and to make things ready for them ; and she with her daughter and George expected to follow in a week or two. But that was several weeks ago ; the expected summons from Mr. Benson had not come, and no one could guess when it would.

July came in with its glowing skies and sultry heats ; and one Saturday afternoon, when they heard that a mail was in, Clare put on

her bonnet, at her mother's desire, to walk to the post-office. "There may be a letter from your father," she said; "at least, there ought to be." Clare thought there might also be one for herself: it was several weeks now since she had heard from William. The regiment might be on the march, she supposed, or possibly there had been another battle. She walked slowly; the post-office lay two miles off, and the heat was intense.

"Nothing for you, Miss Benson," said the good-natured old post-master, looking up from the letters he was sorting.

"Nothing for my mother?" she asked, not betraying her own disappointment.

"No, my dear, nothing. Here is one for Mrs. Rutherford, from her son, the captain."

"Shall I carry it to her?" said Clare, her face flushing. "I pass her house, you know."

"Do so, my dear. It's sure to be good news, as he writes himself."

Mrs. Rutherford looked up smiling when she saw Clare enter the gate, and came out to the garden to meet her.

"Come in, my dear, and sit down; you look hot and tired," drawing an easy-chair to the open window. "I see what you've brought for me, and it's very good of you; I was just going to send."

Mrs. Rutherford opened the letter and read it. It did not take long: there were but a few lines. She gave a little scream of dismay, and her face turned pale.

"Oh, William, William!"

Clare was frightened. "What is it, dear Mrs. Rutherford? Is he ill?"

"No, not that, my child. I cannot, cannot tell you. Read for yourself."

Clare did read, her face growing as white as the paper that rustled in her trembling fingers. Then she folded up the letter, and handed it back. Captain Rutherford was married!

The mother opened it again and read aloud the concluding lines as a woman dazed. "My wife insists upon my bringing her to see you, mother; so I have obtained a short leave of absence, and we hope to be with you in a week's time, say about the seventeenth."

"Is not the seventeenth to-day, Clare, child?" she said, helplessly.

"Yes," replied Clare, as she got up to go; and the two women looked steadily at each other. The truth was slowly forcing itself to the minds of both, that the idol they had worshipped was only one of clay.

"They'll travel by rail to the Denid Station, and come on thence by carriage," spoke Mrs. Rutherford, a sort of doubt on her troubled face. "Won't they, Clare?"

But at that moment there came a cloud of dust and a rattle of carriage wheels along the road. The carriage stopped, and Mrs. Rutherford started forward, the mother-love glowing in her faded

cheeks and brightening her eyes. Clare passed out by a side-door into a shaded path and so into the shrubbery ; and from thence glanced out, unseen.

Yes, it was William. A little thinner and darker than when he went away, a little more grace—or perhaps one may say, fashion—in his movements ; but voice and smile were unchanged, and he walked with the old kingly tread. By his side stood a lady in stylish travelling-dress, her plumed hat shading an arch, sparkling face. Thoughts of the old time came over Clare like a flood, and she shivered from head to foot.

Drawing her gauzy shawl closer about her, she got away, through circuitous paths, unseen, wandering away, as it were, to the wilderness.

The sun was setting. The dusk grew denser, but she found the way, and bore on ; not hurrying—she felt as if it were hardly worth while to be in haste about anything now, and night had no terrors for one whose soul was groping in utter darkness on the borders of that land whose name is despair.

She came out into the open road at last. It was lighter here, and people passed her occasionally ; acquaintances, most of them, who paused in careless, kindly country fashion for a word of friendly salutation. The little church, close by her own home, was lighted up for special evening service. A celebrated minister was announced to preach that night, and her mother had spoken of going to hear him. Clare did not go in. She went home.

The house was dark and silent when she reached it—they were all at church. She took off her bonnet and sat down in the porch.

She dropped her face in her hands and sat motionless. None but He to whom all hearts are open knew what bitterness was in the girl's soul. In the storm of grief that beat upon her, the anchor of Faith seemed giving way, and the waves of doubt and unbelief washed up to her feet. If he, whom she had so believed in, was false, what was there in earth or above it that she could trust ? Suddenly a sound broke the stillness.

" If distress befall you, painful though it be,
Let not grief appal you, to your Saviour flee,
He, ever near, your prayers will hear, and calm your perturbation,
The waves of woe shall ne'er o'erflow the rock of your salvation."

The church doors and windows were thrown open that hot night, and the words of the old Puritan hymn floated out clear and distinct in the still air. Grand words—grand in their solemn meaning, and in the full sweep of the melody to which they were set. She listened, awed and thrilled, as if at a message from the "unseen land."

" When earth's prospects fail you, let it not distress ;
Better comforts wait you, God will surely bless.
To Jesus flee, your help He'll be, your Heavenly consolation,
For griefs below can ne'er o'erthrow the rock of your salvation."

The moonlight, flickering through the tendrils of the vine, fell on her bowed head. The waves of doubt receded, the sure anchors of Faith and Trust took up their hold once more. That great sorrow still lay heavy at her heart, but it would not make shipwreck of her soul.

A sound of voices and footsteps in the road gave token that the service was over. She went to the gate and stood there waiting.

George ran up first. "Oh, Clare! William Rutherford is back!"

"I know it, dear."

"Have you seen him? Has he been here?"

"No, he has not been here."

"Norris says he saw a lady with him in the carriage. Who is she, I wonder?"

"She is his wife, George."

"His wife!" The boy fairly gasped. "Captain Rutherford isn't married!"

"Yes, he is married."

"Oh, Clare!"

A delicate hand, cold as ice, was laid over the lad's mouth, and he knew he must be silent. Silent now and always. Clare's face was in shadow, and he could not see its expression. George had not yet learned the lesson that comes to us all sooner or later in life, to suffer and be silent.

"Rutherford married! You don't seem to care, Clare."

The pale, tired face was turned wearily. "Not care! Little brother, you don't know——"

"Yes, I do know," said the boy impetuously. "I wish John was here!"

"Hush, George. All that which you are thinking of passed long ago."

"And—was it quite over?"

Some sudden impulse made her draw the boy's head down to her and kiss him. "John is away, and you are all that I have left to love, George."

"I'll love you enough for him and for everyone. I do love you, Clare." Sincere, loving, brotherly words; but they could not appease the hunger of the weak human heart that still cried out with a voiceless cry through the silent watches of the night for *one* face and *one* voice.

Mrs. Benson talked pleasantly the next morning as she poured out the coffee of the unexpected return of Captain Rutherford and his bride. Some expression, fleeting and suppressed in a moment, in her daughter's face struck pain to her heart. Clare had not quite forgotten her old girlish love for the young man, she thought: but she had never considered him a sufficient match for her; things had turned out all for the best.

Ere breakfast was over, to their great surprise Mr. Benson walked

in, having just landed from the steamer. He appeared to have come, as was his wont, to settle down again, and did not revert to his project of removing elsewhere.

"Do you remember Ned Conway—that we used to know in Ohio?" he asked his wife.

"Yes, of course I do," she answered.

"I met him just now: he is staying down here for a bit; come to see some old aunt or other."

"I suppose he is very rich now?"

"Worth a million, I believe. He is a widower, and his little daughter, Jenny, has lately married."

How different all things looked this morning to Clare. The falsity of William Rutherford had brought to her that strange awakening of the heart to the world's bitterness which no other experience in life can give. The hope which had glorified all things outward and inward was gone for ever. Nothing upon earth could ever lure it back again. Even her own face looked unfamiliar to Clare as she stood before the little mirror, putting on her bonnet, before starting for church. A sweet, fair face it was, and the dainty white ribbons and drooping bluebells matched it to perfection. Mrs. Benson thought, wondering in the depths of her ambitious, motherly heart, whether this delicate blossom of hers might not suit Mr. Conway's fastidious taste.

As she was going in to church behind her mother, Clare, in shutting up her parasol, dropped her handkerchief. A gentleman picked it up. "I am afraid my little friend has forgotten me altogether," he said, as he restored it with a bow. Looking up, Clare met a pair of kindly grey eyes, and a pleasant smile that had certainly belonged in the old time to Mr. Conway. He held her hand an instant, speaking some pleasant words about being very glad to meet her again; then they all went in. He was a good-looking man of middle age.

The congregation were on their feet, for service was beginning, and Clare glided among them to her accustomed place, unconscious that a certain glance followed her eagerly. Looking across the church, later, she encountered the dark eyes of William Rutherford fixed full on her face. The blush that burned on her cheeks under that intent gaze was not the blush of love; the time for that had gone by. At least Clare told herself so.

When service was over, there were greetings outside as usual. Old Mrs. Rutherford was talking to Mrs. Benson and introducing her daughter-in-law. Clare's turn came: "Miss Benson, let me make you acquainted with my son's wife, Mrs. Rutherford."

Clare spoke some words of greeting, remembering that this lady was a stranger. "Not a bad or a heartless woman," she thought, looking up into the lovely face, all bloom and sparkle, that had come between her and happiness. The bitterness in this thought none knew but herself. Captain Rutherford, watching the meeting

from a little distance, saw only friendliness and good-will in Clare's reception of his bride. "She carries it off well—or else she didn't care for me as I thought," he said to himself resentfully; and he wondered whether it really was so easy for her to give him up. At the gate stood a large, beautiful carriage with fine grey horses, and two servants in attendance. It was Mr. Conway's, who was soliciting Mrs. Benson to take a little drive in it with him; he wished to take her to call on his old aunt. Captain Rutherford got out in time to see Mrs. Benson already seated in the carriage and Clare listening to a fine-looking stranger, who had his head bent talking to her. She turned as he passed close to her, and gave him her hand with a calm, polite "Welcome home, Captain Rutherford."

Was this all? Why, he had expected—he hardly knew what he had expected—but certainly not this. And he saw her placed in the carriage by her mother's side, the fine man taking his seat opposite to her, with some such feeling as Adam may have experienced when he saw the gates of Paradise close behind him, and realised that it was for ever. Years might come and go, and the garden he had kept and tended would bloom on in eternal verdure; but its beauty would never again gladden his sight. Not for him were the gales of balm, not for him would the roses blow.

Remorse and tenderness, love and regret, lay in the yearning look William Rutherford cast after Clare. His wife's bright beauty seemed dim to him beside the serene face and still composure of this girl, whom he had slighted in a way that a woman seldom forgives; whose heart he had won only to cast it aside when he found that his love for her stood in the way of his own worldly advancement; this girl who, putting aside their past as if it had never been, greeted him with cool friendliness and a certain fine reserve that made him feel, even while he stood close beside her, as if they were miles apart, as if she were by a thousand degrees his superior.

If she had betrayed any feeling at meeting him, he could have borne it better; anger, even contempt; anything but this quiet supreme indifference. William Rutherford had not married his wife for love, but for ambition. Her family were mighty; her brother, Colonel Marsh, had it in his power to advance his fortunes, or to keep him back: but if ever William Rutherford felt inclined to curse the demon which had misled him, it was now, while the reality of all that he had lost was there before him, taunting him with thoughts of what "might have been." And the sweetest dream of his life vanished utterly as Mr. Conway's carriage dashed off, and he caught a brief, fleeting glimpse of a small figure lying back among the cushions, and a delicate profile clearly outlined against the crimson lining.

Mrs. Benson went to call upon Captain and Mrs. Rutherford next day. Clare excused herself: she was not yet quite sure of being able to suppress her true feelings under the guise of a cool indifference. But that evening she met him. It was in the gloaming;

under the group of gloomy pine trees that lay back from the road between the two houses. They met face to face; and neither could affect to pass by without extreme rudeness. Clare felt as if she should faint; he grew white with agitation, even to his trembling lips.

"Clare!—Clare!—may I dare ask you to forgive me?" he said, putting out his hand.

"What else can I do?" she replied on impulse; for, as both felt, this was not the moment for attempts at make-believe. "I may forgive, but I cannot forget."

"Do you think I ceased to love you; do you think I could transfer to another the love I gave to you? Never, never, so long as the world shall last. The demon of ambition got hold of me," he went on in terrible excitement, "and I sacrificed to it love, honour, all I can ever hold dear in life."

"You might have spared me the pain of coming back here so soon; of bringing your wife to Canoop," she said, bitterly. "Did you think I was made of wood or stone?"

"And do you think I am made of heartless indifference!" he cried, piteously. "Clare, I did not mean to do it. Weeks and weeks ago I believed you had all left the place. News came out to us that your father had gone to settle elsewhere."

"It cannot be helped now," she sighed. "What is done is done; the past is irrevocable. I will wish you good-bye now."

"God bless you—my darling, I was about to say; but I have not the right to say it now. May God keep you, and pardon me. Do your best to forget and hate a miserable man, Clare, who feels ashamed of himself for a pitiful wretch every hour that he lives."

He wrung her hand with a passionate pressure, and went striding on. Clare stole back within the thicket and sat down on the stump of a tree. There she gave the reins for a few minutes to her misery, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"But I must not," she said, presently. "To continue to care for him would be a sin. I will strive to put him quite away, to forget him, as he says; and I hope God will help me to do so."

Within three months of that time Clare married Mr. Conway, and went away with him to the gay city near which lay his home.

II.

VERY fair and aristocratic Mrs. Conway looked amid her elegant surroundings—very fair and gracious was she, as the mistress of Mr. Conway's sumptuous house.

Six months a wife! She could hardly realise it as she sat before the grate on that spring morning, her pretty feet buried among the soft wool of an ottoman, her white hands toying idly with the silken

tassels of her morning robe. All about her was light and warmth and luxury ; but just then she was not thinking of it. Her thoughts were back with a vine-covered house far away in the country ; of summer winds blowing softly among the tree-tops, of apple trees gnarled and crooked, of a cascade that fell down miniature rocks in a crowded garden, and of the green meadows and the simplicity of the dear old life : the visible connecting link between that past time and the present being in the stalwart, bearded soldier at her side, John Benson. They were conversing in a low tone, not to disturb Mr. Conway, who sat at the table some distance behind them, writing letters.

"You don't know, Clare, how much I've wanted to see you, or how impossible it was to get a furlough until now."

She got up and put her two hands on his shoulder with an impulsive movement in her gladness at seeing him, going back easily and naturally to the old freedom of speech and action.

"You dear old Jack ! I can hardly realise yet that you're actually with us at last. Are you sure you won't vanish into thin air, presently ?"

He laughed. "Not much danger of that, I think."

"No, you look pretty substantial," with an admiring glance at his straight, powerful figure ; for in outward appearance not less than in other qualities young Benson was "every inch a soldier."

Jack sat down. She took the ottoman at his feet, laying her white, braceleted arm across his knee. She had always liked to sit so, he remembered, when they were boy and girl together. But she had worn no jewelled ornaments on her wrist then. He took the small fingers into his own broad palm, turning the plain gold ring that encircled one of them round and round.

"It seems odd to see *you* wearing a wedding ring, Clare."

She smiled a little, but said nothing.

"Do you know, Clare," stroking her hair, "I used to think you had a girlish fancy for William Rutherford."

"Did you ?" she gently said.

"Rutherford is a fine fellow ; one of the best men I have ever known and the bravest," went on this unconscious brother. "A trifle too ambitious, maybe ; but one can forgive that in a man who has so many good qualities. Such a splendid fighter as he is, too. You ought to see him in action, Clare. He does not get at all excited—just goes into it as coolly as if there were no such thing as failure possible. I don't believe he ever *thinks* of failure. Now and then the notion has crossed me that he does not value his own life. I'm sure anyone might think so to see the rebel bullets whistling thick about us, and he never flinching or letting the men flinch. And he is so gentle and cheery with them ; so considerate for all their comforts when they are off duty."

Mrs. Conway's cheeks kindled at this. She had all a woman's

admiration for bravery. But the glow died out of her face in surprise at her brother's next words.

"His wife's death was a sad thing, was it not, Clare?"

"Whose wife? Whose death?"

"Captain Rutherford's. Did you not hear of it? She died about two months ago."

Clare's breath seemed to grow short.

"No, I never heard of it," she said. "How strange! What was the matter with her?"

"Fever, I believe. She had gone on a visit to her people in Baltimore, and her husband was not with her at her death, for it was rather sudden. And what do you think he has done, Clare? He is a proud man; too proud. His wife left the whole of her fortune to him, and he would not take it. He said he had not so much right to it as her own relatives, and he gave it back to them. Quixotic, was it not?"

"I don't know," said Clare.

"It was always said that he married Mrs. Winchester for her money; this disproves it," continued Lieutenant Benson. "I never thought so. He married her for promotion, nothing else; he thought Colonel Marsh, who had so much in his power, would push him on, once he was connected with him. But in that he was destined to be disappointed; for not long after his sister's marriage, the Colonel fell in battle. As you must have heard, Clare."

"Yes, Jack, I heard that."

"Rutherford was always the most independent man alive: he used to be when he was at home in the old days. But he is a good fellow, worth his weight in gold. He saved my life in the battle at Corinth at the deadly risk of his own. I knew who it was before I saw him. When he had got me away a little and I was able to speak, I tried to thank him. He smiled, and seemed to think nothing of it. 'All right, Jack,' he said; 'I will not let them kill you if I can help it.' I shall never forget it, Clare."

Clare would not forget it, either. In her mind, one such brave, generous deed cancelled a multitude of sins. Not that he was guilty of a multitude. All that she had known of him in the old time, all that Jack had told her of him since he entered the army, bore witness in his favour: all but the one fact of his treachery to herself. And as for his poor wife, Clare's heart went out kindly towards her; the beautiful woman who had been a friend to the poor soldiers when they were far away from home and kindred.

She had been picturing her as William Rutherford's wife and companion, when the snows of winter were drifting over her grave.

Remarking that he had "heaps to do," John Benson put his hat on, and went forth to show himself in the streets. Clare, on her way to quit the room, halted behind her husband and put her hand kindly on his shoulder.

"Have you nearly finished your letters, Edward?"

He turned to look upon her, and drew her hand within his. "Was it so, Clare?" he gently said.

"Was what so?" she asked.

"That you had a girlish fancy for William Rutherford?"

The question stirred her pulses; an odd thrill passed through her heart. But she answered him candidly, after a moment's pause:

"I think I had, dear. I thought, you see, that he had a fancy for me. It could not have been much of one, however, considering that he made haste to marry someone else. Could it, Edward?"

"I should say not. And what did you think, Clare, when he married that someone else?"

"I thought how lucky I had been to escape a man so fickle and faithless. A girl feels ashamed at having cared for a weathercock."

"Right, my love," said Mr. Conway. And he pressed her hand to his lips.

The next act in the life's drama was the sudden death of Mr. Conway.

As a Dives he had been clad in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; but no Lazarus lay uncared for at his gate, no cry from the oppressed went up to Heaven against him. True and just to all, generous to those who needed, caring for the poor, there was little in Edward Conway's life that would not bear closest inspection. And Clare stood beside the velvet-draped coffin, in the darkened room, and looked down upon the dead face of him who had been to her a tender husband, a wise counsellor and true friend. In his affection she had found, if not happiness, at least peace; and that was much. And remembering all that he had been to her, she bent low and laid her cheek down in a mute and tender caress upon the clasped hands, cold and still now, that had ministered so untiringly to her every wish.

Clare had to give up her magnificent house, for it now belonged to Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Conway's daughter; as did also a great portion of his property. But Clare had more than enough; it was all as it should be, she thought: and a comfortable fortune was settled upon Mrs. Benson.

After some months given to arrangements, and to getting over the natural grief for the loss of a good husband, Clare went back to Canoop. Mr. and Mrs. Benson were really departing for a new home then. He was gone, and she was going as soon as she could leave her bed, for she had had a long illness. George was gone to college.

"I should like to buy the old home and settle down in it," thought Clare: "there's no other I should like so well." And she did so.

Walking slowly down the road one morning, the sunshine glinting

across the crape folds of her dress, she encountered Mrs. Rutherford, looking so worn and haggard that Clare enquired what was amiss.

"William is wounded," was the answer. "I have just had the news. He is lying at Nashville, and I must go to him. But oh, I don't know how I shall get there, all alone! I am now about to say good-bye to your mother, Clare; she will have left before I come back," added the old lady. So Clare turned back with her.

They found Mrs. Benson, still unable to leave her bed, in a state of great distress. A despatch had come to say that her son John was lying in the hospital at Nashville, dangerously wounded. "You must go to him, Clare," sobbed the poor mother; "I cannot."

"So you will not have to travel alone," said Clare to Mrs. Rutherford.

The journey accomplished, Nashville reached, Surgeon Moore received the two ladies. "Lieutenant Benson is better, nearly out of danger, I am glad to say," was his report to them; "but Captain Rutherford is very low."

They were lying in the same ward. Mrs. Rutherford, with a blanched face, bent over her son. His eyes were closed; he lay nearly lifeless.

"He makes no effort to get well," whispered the surgeon gravely to Clare, whom he at first took to be the captain's sister or cousin. "He is just like a man who has no longer any hope in life."

Clare drew near and stood beside the bed, looking down upon him who once had been all the world to her. What subtle magnetism was in her touch that his whole frame thrilled as her hand came in contact with his? The dark eyes flashed wide open, a great wave of colour leaped into his face.

"Is it my little girl? My promised wife? Come back to me after all this weary time?"

Clare stood silent and pale, unable to utter a sound. His little girl! His promised wife! The words touched her as she had thought nothing on earth could ever touch her again. And the bare walls of the hospital stretched away into a lovely landscape, and the carol of birds and the fragrance of lilacs were about her, and the same voice, *his* voice, was in her ear, and the words were, "my little girl, my promised wife."

The sweet dream lasted but a moment—then her thoughts came back to the present; to the long rows of beds with their poor, wounded occupants, to the anxious mother and the quiet, attentive doctor.

Looking down she met his glance, not listless now, but intense, eager. He put up his arm weakly and drew her down towards him.

"Will you ever forgive me?" he whispered.

"I forgave you long ago, William."

"Clare, you are good as heaven. And will you be my wife if I recover?"

She hesitated. She would have been more than mortal if the thought had not intruded of how he had once deserted her. But his eyes were pleading eloquently.

"I have never *loved* any woman but you in all my life, Clare. Promise me, my dear."

"Promise, young lady, if only just to appease him," breathed the surgeon warningly in her ear. "I will not answer for the consequences if he is crossed. Life or death may lie in it."

"I promise," whispered Clare, bending her head. And her face was so full of a solemn, tender joy, that the little surgeon thought involuntarily of "saints glorified."

He did not know how all that the woman's soul had unconsciously longed for through the first early months of weary waiting, through the succeeding anguish of keen disappointment and bitter loss, had met in this hour its full fruition. No one living had known that.

Clare established herself by Jack's bedside. He watched her with a feeling of intense satisfaction, thinking how nice and home-like it seemed to have her there.

"Why, you've grown to be actually beautiful, Clare!" he cried, with a brother's politeness.

She blushed a little and laughed—a low, pleasant laugh. The patient in the next bed heard it, and raised himself on his elbow to look at her, thinking, for he had an artist's eye, what a pretty picture she made standing there, where the lamplight fell in a flood over her shining hair, her animated face, and the sweeping folds of her soft grey dress.

In time the two soldiers were pronounced convalescent, and all the party travelled to Canoop together. Captain Rutherford pleaded with Clare to marry him in Nashville before they started: which was very unreasonable of him, and his mother scolded him soundly. But he felt still so uncertain of his happiness; he had a morbid fear of losing her.

George received his new brother-in-law elect very coolly. The slight once offered to his sister still rankled at the youth's heart, and the flame of resentment lit his cheek at sight of Captain Rutherford. So he made no pretence of cordiality, and did not take the hand the young officer held out.

"George, your sister has forgiven me. Cannot you do the same?"

The old, cordial friendliness in words and tone softened George a little. One glance at Clare's happy face, and the barriers of resentment were broken down.

"I suppose it's all right," said George. "Good luck to you both."

At the expiration of the twelvemonth after Mr. Conway's death there was a quiet wedding at Canoop. Mrs. Benson went then to join her husband, and Clare took possession of her own home.

Looking back upon the troubled past, William Rutherford could hardly believe in his present happiness. He recalled the days and weeks and months that succeeded to his ambitious marriage, and the loss of his wife, and the raging of war and battle, when he was at length struck down—all as one looks back upon some dreadful dream. And he had awoke one evening to find Clare's face, tender and pitiful, bending over him, and Clare's soft hand in his. It was all over now ; the self-accusations, the bitter regrets, the remorse of those troubled days ; only, sometimes, glancing down upon his wife's face, he wondered with a thrill of pain if she had suffered as deeply as he.

"Clare," he would say to her, "our history is like a fairy tale."

One evening they were sitting together in the porch. The moon, rising large and bright above the Jersey hills, shone upon them both, as it had shone upon her sitting there alone that long-past night in her misery. The little church was lighted up as it had been then ; and presently a flood of melody came floating out towards them, wave after wave of sound, of the grand old hymn and the familiar homely words.

"Listen, William," she whispered, her heart strangely thrilling.

"If distress befall you, painful though it be,
Let not grief appal you, to your Saviour flee.
He, ever near, your prayer will hear, and calm your perturbation,
The waves of woe shall ne'er o'erflow the rock of your salvation."

When the last note had died away, and she nestled closer to her husband, he saw that she was crying. Very tenderly he put his arm round her as they sat on in silence in the moonlight. Clare could not speak ; her heart was full. She was offering up a fervent thanksgiving to Him who had brought her safely through the troubled waters of the past ; who had been in very deed and truth, the "Rock of her salvation."



LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



ON THE WAY TO THE CONSULATE.

Palma, June 5th, 1887.

MY DEAR E.—The days pass and bring their changes. These changes are small and slight, perhaps; they are changes of degree rather than of kind; but in this favoured little island of Mallorca, every change counts for a great deal.

I told you in my last letter that I had brought over one of Shew's detective cameras, from which we have derived infinite amusement. This has been A.'s special mission, whilst I have turned my attention to the larger and more serious machine. I think we have exhausted every street and nearly all the inhabitants of Palma.

Once it was a case of the biter bit; for whilst I was taking a photograph of the Lonja on the port, A. meanly took advantage of my head being in the focusing cloth to catch me

and record me in this very ridiculous position. I send you the result, and beg you to admire the group of open-mouthed supporters by whom I am surrounded.

In point of numbers they are nothing. We have to pay the penalty of admiration, notoriety, celebrity, or whatever may be the sentiment we excite. Very frequently we are escorted by a tail of boys and girls half a street in length. We sometimes hiss-sh-sh at them, and flap our arms, as one might at a flock of importunate geese; but these boys and girls are not geese, and we flap in vain. They look upon it, indeed, as part of the performance, and increase their forces.

The other morning we nearly came to a violent end. It was towards luncheon time, and we were making for our palace. We had had a very successful morning, and were returning with a dozen charming views in embryo—that is to say in an undeveloped state. One of these was the old Moorish Palace, of which I send you a specimen. We went into the great courtyard, and A., in his best Mallorcan and politest manner, asked permission to photograph the building. The sentry went off, an officer came out, was very civil, and gave us leave to do anything we liked. It is, perhaps, the most striking and interesting building in Palma; but, alas, has undergone repair and restoration, like the rest of its kind.

Next we took the view from the bottom of the Bourne; and you will observe the cathedral rising with singularly fine effect above the trees.

All the small fun over, our accompanying crowd of juveniles had dispersed to fresh fields and pastures new in search of excitement, and we were proceeding up a narrow street in the blessing of repose. A., indeed, was complaining of headache, of which you will hear more presently.

As we neared the corner, a karrawakky dashed round at full speed, right upon us. There was no pavement in the street, and absolutely no room for foot-passengers. If we had made ourselves flat as pancakes, still we should have been in more than jeopardy: and we were not ghosts to pass at discretion through bricks and mortar. The driver, however, was determined to make ghosts of us if possible. We were only heretical Englishmen, and therefore of neither use nor ornament to the world at large. This is the opinion of a good many of the Mallorcans: an opinion, perhaps, not confined to Mallorca only.

I fled backwards, and saved my life by diving into a beautiful old court. But it was humiliating to do this, and A. was determined not to be humiliated. He seized the horses, and, at the risk of his own life, stopped the thing in its mad career. The horses plunged, reared, and backed: A. never released his hold. He was pale with anger; the coachman was pale with fright. He thought his last moment had come, or at the very least that he would have to appear before a magistrate to answer for his crime.

You have heard of the pearls and diamonds that fell like a torrent from the mouth of the Beauty in the Wood, every time she opened that extraordinary and bewitching treasure box. You should have heard A.'s torrent of words. They were not pearls and diamonds, or

I would have enclosed you specimens for your gratification and adornment; specimens that, as it is, I feel bound to withhold from you.

Enough, that they were very strong words indeed; very much to the purpose. They blanched the cheek of the would-be assassin of a driver, who shook and trembled like the guilty and cowardly creature that he was.

I was charmed at the scene, which I surveyed with just one eye round the corner of the doorway, so that I ran no personal risk. It was delightful to come down upon one of these wretched karrawakky drivers with a vengeful torrent of strong words in his own language. It was a delicious sensation. I spurred A. on to greater deeds. "Down with him!" I cried, just putting my head a hair's breadth more out of the doorway. "Make an example of him. Shoot him, if necessary. It is in a good cause—defence of our lives." For, like Mr. Pickwick, I like to be very brave when not running any actual danger.

We spared the man's life; but I doubt if he will ever recover his fright, whilst I am quite certain that he will never again try to run over an Englishman.

When it was all over, and the carriage had gone on its wild career—wild no longer—I emerged from my humiliating position (though I hold that discretion is the better part of valour, and that in all dangers absence of body is better than presence of mind), and we went our way.

A. now laughed it off. If an Englishman singles himself out by any act of valour, or by doing the right thing at a critical moment, he always does laugh it off. A Frenchman will submit to be made a hero and to be carried round on the shoulders of the multitude; whilst a German will blow his own trumpet and canonise himself if an unappreciative world neglects to do it for him. But an Englishman is made of different material.

"Wretched man!" laughed A. as we went along. "We were as near done for as possible. These Mallorcans think no more of running down an Englishman than we do of shooting a rabbit. So glad I took it calmly and quietly," he continued, whilst I opened my eyes widely and wondered whether the shock had affected my brain. "So glad I didn't use strong language, or swear, or anything of that sort. I always like to take things calmly. Much better plan; don't you think so?"

By this time we had reached our palace, and I was spared the difficult task of replying to this extraordinary statement. The blacksmith was hammering away at his forge, and next door a sweet voice was singing "*Che farò*" with wonderful expression and pathos, whilst the singer's skilful fingers drew heart-stirring tones from the piano. All music sounds marvellously well in these old palaces. The rooms are so large, so slightly furnished, uncarpeted, undraped, that all the tones of which the instruments are capable come out with ringing effect.

Catalina is punctuality itself, and our Olympian feast awaited us. She had prepared a most dainty luncheon, concluded with delicious wild strawberries and orange juice. The latter we took in place of cream, which is not to be had any more than butter in this island of Mallorca; but I think we gain by the alternative.

I hope you will not think, from these occasional allusions to our cordon bleu, to nectar and ambrosia, and the delights of the table, that I am relaxing my hitherto severe indifference to these animal pleasures and indulgences; but in this hot and enervating climate life has to be supported. If we allowed ourselves to fall below a certain point, we should never recover lost ground. Death from syncope or martyrs to abstinence would have to be the melancholy record upon our untimely tombs.

A lady, by the way, informed H. C. on his return to England, that the reason cream and butter were not to be had in Mallorca, and milk was scarce, was because it was all made into cheeses. I doubted the statement; recalled to his mind that we had never heard of or seen Mallorcan cheeses in our wanderings; and that cows had been very few and far between. H. C., however, declared that as his friend was Spanish, she must be right. Just as if, in England, because the calendar marks Midsummer Day, it never happens that at that time we are often freezing and laid up with influenza.

So I made special enquiries on my arrival here, and sent word to H. C. that Mallorcan cheeses are unknown and do not exist.

I find him as obstinate as Galileo; and he replies, with an aggravation that I intend to embosom until my return, that he still believes in Mallorcan cheeses. But Galileo was Galileo, and H. C. is only a great poet; and Galileo was right, and H. C. is wrong. There is a great difference between right and wrong. Obstinacy in a good cause is only firmness, and may be martyrdom; but in a bad cause it has a name with which I will not shock your refined sensibilities.

I have told H. C. to come out and judge for himself, and I have no doubt that he will perversely write back and declare that I am in a tantalising mood.

But I greatly miss my old Mallorcan companion. The very stones of the streets seem to cry out and ask why he, too, does not tread them with me.

Then he was so good in carrying the camera, and giving himself all the hard work. A. is very good, also, but believes in a division of labour. When it is time to go out, he cries "Come along!" takes up the elegant little tripod, leaving me the bulky remainder, and looks the while very magnanimous and self-sacrificing.

And, of course, he is so; for why should A., or anyone else, do my work for me, and carry my burdens? Even a light and elegant tripod is something. At least I suppose so, for I know that the remainder is a very great deal, at any rate, to my limited capacities.

I often think, with self-application, of an old Scotchwoman I met

in the Highlands last autumn. In the days of her youth she might have been one of those brawny wives who call out "Caller herrin'!" with far-reaching voices. She lived in a cottage that was only a butt and a ben by the roadside, and her old husband was keeping himself warm in the chimney corner, cowering over some peat embers. "He's just a puir body!" said she. "He's easily pressed down, but he's easily pulled up again." But I beg you will never say this of me, if I should ever reach that hoary age.

We are very happy in our old palace. There is a feeling of expanse in the rooms, and it takes us quite a long time to get round



ANOTHER "INSTANTANEOUS EFFECT."

them. A. receives deputations, which I much enjoy. They are not legal or political, but artistic and parochial. Two ladies called the other morning. They had bric-à-brac to sell: the head of Juno dug up from the ruins of ancient Carthage, the hand of Jupiter from the ruins of Pompeii. I thought they rather mixed up dates and countries and heathen mythologies, but I said nothing. They had also a pair of wonderful Majolica plates, and a piece of the veritable cedar-wood used in the building of Solomon's temple. One lady was young and beautiful, and I no longer wondered at A.'s large collection of antiquities. The other was fortunately ancient, and never could have been charming at any time; but she made an excellent duenna. A. praised and bought everything; out of a pure spirit of philanthropy, he explained to me; but if the elder lady had

come alone, my impression is that the pure spirit of philanthropy would have been nowhere.

No sooner were they dismissed than the parochial element entered in the shape of two Sisters of Mercy, who, of course, were equally successful in their mission. I do not wish to insinuate that Sisters of Mercy are subject to the infirmities of more ordinary mortals; yet they evidently much enjoyed their visit, thoroughly entered into the pleasures of conversation, and departed with reluctance. The ceremonious bows and curtsies that passed would have done honour to a reception at Court. I do not say that they embraced A. on taking leave, but I am quite sure they would have liked to do so.

My first Sunday was a great day here. A. placed before me a choice of amusements and occupations. It was an *embarras de richesses*. In Rome you must do as Rome does; this, I believe, has been a settled principle since the days of Romulus and Remus.

In Palma there is no English church: therefore I will not pretend to you that we went to church. In an island where the English colony consists of five people, four of whom will shortly have taken flight, an English church would fare badly. Of course, our English Consul might have service at the Consulate: might read prayers, and afterwards give us a sermon out of Baxter, or Robert Hall, or if he wished to be especially intellectual, from Robertson. I might even say that it is his duty to do this. But he does not do it: holds up no light to our darkened understandings. We have to find our sermons in stones. Running brooks are scarce in Mallorca, but stones are abundant. By the way, that was an excellent idea of the Scotchman, who said that Shakespeare had been misquoted, or had mixed himself up, and what he evidently meant to say was not that "there were sermons in stones, books in the running brooks," etc., but "sermons in books, stones in the running brooks, and good in everything." Comment on my part upon the old Scotchman's objection is unnecessary.

The greatness of the day alluded to consisted in its being one of the occasions on which the Bull-fights are given in Palma.

This exhibition takes place about twice a year in Mallorca; and I need not tell you that it is twice too much. A. placed before me this great temptation with due emphasis. To his regret—I could see he regretted it, though he was too polite to say so—I would not listen to the voice of the charmer. My feelings had once been harrowed at Granada, and I did not care to have them harrowed again.

Moreover, the Mallorcan Bull-fights, naturally, are not the best of their kind; and the more inferior they are, the greater their horrors and the danger to human life. Nevertheless, I begged A. not to think of me, but to go without me. I would remain quietly at home, shut up in our great palace, reflecting upon the vanities of existence, and reading my favourite Hervey's "*Meditations among the Tombs*;" a book I always fly to when I find my spirits are a little more elevated

than is consistent with the mutability of all things. A., however, would not go without me; a sacrifice to friendship and hospitality I could only appreciate.

It ended in our passing a very quiet afternoon, to which even you might have lent your countenance.

We went out for a short time and saw crowds of Mallorcans, dressed in their best, hurrying in all states and stages of excitement towards the Bull-ring. They seem to go mad upon these occasions. The sight of blood and cruelty, of danger and even death, appears to raise them to the height of enthusiasm and happiness. They rend the air with shouts, huzzas, bravos, at scenes that fill us with a sickening horror. If a toreador fails to please them by a due exhibition of skill, they would almost rend him asunder. If by chance he is killed, as not infrequently happens, their only feeling is that his life has been sacrificed in an excellent cause.

But I will not moralise about the Bull-fights. Fortunately it is autres peuples, autres mœurs. The Spaniards will have them; and if we have not Bull-fights at home, I daresay we have other abuses to set right if we could only go to work in the proper way to find them out.

We spent, I have said, our afternoon more worthily. Mr. and Mrs. Lee La Trobe Bateman drove down from Il Tereno and took afternoon tea with us, accompanied by Don Negro, to whom I must not fail to introduce you.

Don Negro is one of the most interesting inhabitants of Mallorca, as well as one of the best known—though he is only a dog. He is a privileged dog. Whilst all other dogs are commanded to be muzzled, Don Negro is allowed full liberty of mouth and bark. If he upsets half-a-dozen children, or frightens an old woman to death, or bites a piece out of an old man's leg who does not get out of his way quickly enough—it is only Don Negro, and whatever he does is right. He is a beautiful black dog, half retriever, half Newfoundland, with eyes full of intelligence, and a brain which understands all you say to him. He invariably rushes ahead of the carriage, and it is a matter of complete indifference to him that he stirs up clouds of dust from which you emerge at your journey's end choked, blinded and buried.

To-day he signalled his arrival by a feat of special intelligence.

There is a cat that lives—or lived—in the lower and unseen recesses of our palace: a hideous tortoiseshell animal with an unearthly voice, our great aversion. This cat happened to be taking the air in the doorway when Don Negro arrived. Cats are his lawful prey, or he thinks so, and it is the one thing on which he will not hear reason.

A chase began.

The cat scampered off for her hole. Away flew Don Negro with a bark that would have raised the dead, his tail in the air quite as

much as poor pussy's. He caught the unlucky grimalkin, and in the most playful and affectionate manner possible shook the life out of her.

Thus, you see, that though we would not go to the Bull-fight on this particular day, something of the kind came to us. Who is it says that there is an impish element in fate? There are times when it would seem so.

We passed a very pleasant afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Bateman, and as Mr. Mark, our consul, joined us, the English colony found itself assembled under one roof. We drank tea out of cups without handles, and our lady visitor was far more charming than could ever have been Mrs. Thrale, whilst I hope we had no such old bear amongst us as Dr. Johnson could make himself on occasions. We sat out in our garden amidst the flowers and under the waving branches. To-day we had solitude. Our neighbours, including the fifty milliner young women, had all gone off to the Bull-fight, and A. for once was able to sit facing the windows. No cries of Catalina broke upon the startled air. The world around us was as quiet, the heavens above were as serene, as if that horrible spectacle were not going on within a short distance of us.

After the little colony had once more dispersed, each going his separate way, A. and I strolled through the quiet streets into the great and ever-lovely cathedral. To-day, indeed, it seemed to me lovelier than ever, for I saw it under new conditions. The westering summer sun shone in with all its power at the great west window, dyeing pillars and floor, chancel and organ with all the gorgeous tints and tones of the rainbow. It seemed a dream of Paradise. I had never seen the interior so light and brilliant; never had it looked so large and glorious. The whole building was deserted; we had it to ourselves, and, for a time, we wandered about in fairyland. Wandered and loitered, and marvelled at all the beauties of earth and heaven, until the sun went down and the rainbow dissolved and disappeared, and the immense interior returned to its dim religious light and to solitude.

A day or two after this we took our first excursion on land. We decided upon Andraix, as being a part of the island I had not yet seen.

Punctually at ten o'clock we heard the aristocratic rumble of the lordly barouche, and once again I found myself installed in its capacious dimensions. But it was hot weather now; the sun beat fiercely upon the earth; and A., who could not shake off his obstinate headache, found it necessary to have the hood up.

Away we rattled through the streets, A. with his detective camera, I with mine, ready for any emergency. We passed rapidly out of the town, raising clouds of dust as we went, without the aid of Don Negro. Palma is certainly the dustiest place in the world.

We rattled through the picturesque district of Santa Catalina, and swept round by Il Tereno, where the charming house of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Bateman stood out conspicuously under the shadows of Bellver Castle.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the views of sea and land as we went along. The island rounded in a succession of curves and bays. One headland after another opened out magnificently. It is one of the loveliest and most romantic scenes I have ever witnessed. The rich red earth and rocks stood out in warm, exquisite contrast with the green foliage that spread over the slopes. The sand upon the shore was dazzlingly pure and white; the water broke and plashed over it in soothing, gentle curves and ripples—water of the most startling transparency. Rave as you will about the Mediterranean, you can never exaggerate its charms. For many feet from the shore the colour was of the clearest, most exquisite aqua marine. There is nothing else like it in nature. Here and there a bit of sunken rock or seaweed threw a deep purple tone upon the surface. Still further off, in deeper depths, the green tone passed into that wonderful blue which must be seen before it can be realised.

Andraix is a simple, sleepy little town, beautifully situated, but without any very striking feature. The inn is very primitive; a room with a sanded floor, furnished with a few small tables, was its chief apartment. At one of the tables sat a group of men, playing some incomprehensible game with extraordinary and unintelligible cards. They were quiet enough, and received us without too much curiosity or demonstration: an argument in favour of the little town. It has a port, and a good deal of the population is composed of the fishing element; but the port is somewhat far off, and here betrays no sign of its existence.

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DISTANT VIEW OF OUR PALACE.

Hardly anything to-day betrayed sign of existence. Andraix might have been a dead and buried city. The whole place seemed deserted. Whilst luncheon was preparing we explored. The little church on the hill invited our attention, and we toiled up to it in hot sunshine. There was nothing inside or out to repay us for our pilgrimage, except a charming view of the country, its surrounding hills beautiful in all their varied undulations. The town slept in the hollow and on the slopes: a group of many-coloured houses, with flat roofs; a long, straight, somewhat hilly street; picturesque nooks and gardens rich with creepers and blooms: exquisite spots to sketch or paint, but nothing more.

Our most interesting discovery was a wonderful palm tree, which can scarcely have its rival in the island. This we determined to photograph, and our landlord escorted us through the house to which the garden belonged.

In one of the rooms sat an old woman plaiting straw: the most singular old woman it has ever been my fortune to see. I think she must be the smallest old woman in the world. She had an eagle's face, looked altogether about the size of an eagle, and sat in a child's small chair. She seemed quite two hundred years old, and as we went through she took no more notice of us than if we had been invisible, or she a graven image. She gave one quite a creepy, uncanny feeling. I wished A. had taken an instantaneous photograph of her, but I was glad to pass out into the garden, as from the presence of something that was not altogether human.

In the garden all was sunshine and healthy influence. The palm tree flourished and spread its feathery fronds, which swayed in the breeze and glistened in the sun. We set our camera, and nothing would please our landlord but he must also be taken, hat in hand. He seemed to think that by this means he should become immortalized. Then we went back to luncheon.

Our luncheon room was homely and interesting. The card party at the other end in no way interfered with our serenity. They were quiet enough; and presently, when a lady, carrying a prize baby, came in and joined them, their happiness seemed complete. It was no doubt their leisure time; between twelve and two o'clock of the day; though in this sleepy little town all hours and days seem given up to a holiday existence.

Beyond the room, a courtyard opened out, where a few brilliant plants flourished, and any number of cats went racing about in a mad career. From another doorway came sounds of frying and fizzing, and the ample form of our hostess might be seen superintending at a stove, looking as important and full of responsibility as if she had been mistress of all the skill and all the secrets of all the cooks that have been born (cooks are born just as much as poets) since the foundation of the world.

Save the mark! The good woman had grievously mistaken her

vocation, or else the cooking of Andraix is of a strange, mysterious order. Every dish that came before us seemed worse than the last. I thought I should have been poisoned, and I was certainly starved. All the sympathy I met with from A. was convulsions of laughter at my expressions of horror and disgust. We always, somehow, laugh at our friends' misfortunes when they are not deep and terrible. Fortunately our repast wound up with an unlimited supply of cherries : and so, for that day, I was content to fare, as our first parents fared in Eden, upon the fruits of the earth.

After this luncheon-fiasco, A., whose headache showed no signs of change (I began to fear this headache) rested quietly upon his oars, whilst I went forth again to revel in the glowing sunshine and the blue sky. There was a splendid seat on a mound near the church, and there I threw myself at full length upon the grass and surveyed nature.

It was a glorious scene. The little town is very favoured. Hills rose far and wide in every direction and in rich luxuriance. Fields of grain, almost ready for the sickle, were yellowing in the sunshine ; olive orchards, whose time of fruit-bearing had not yet come, abounded. Not far off was the melancholy little cemetery with its sad cypresses, all enclosed in high white walls, that are themselves receptacles for the dead in the form of catacombs. The church itself was closed, but at any time it seemed as if in this sleepy little town no worshippers would be forthcoming to disturb its infinite repose.

I lay dreaming so long upon my exalted mound—out of the world in mind as much as in body—that I forgot all about time and circumstance, the end of all things, the chances and changes of life. What else could be expected of one who had fared to-day as they fared in Eden six thousand years ago ? Was it not fitting that a more ethereal and spiritual frame of thought should take the place of one's ordinary and earthly nature ? Sunshine and warmth and deep blue skies were intoxicating, for there undoubtedly is an intoxication not born of the stirrup or any other cup. When it comes to us we must make the most of it. It vanishes all too soon, and we pass out of Paradise, and feel like the Peri when the gates were closed against her. And then there must come a day when the sere and yellow leaf will put an end to all intoxication born of the senses ; when the radiancy of youth, and the glow of imagination, and the bliss of feeling the world before one, must yield to the inevitable march of time.

Presently I was brought back to earth by observing a figure quietly toiling up the hill, and it gradually dawned upon me that it was A. in search of the truant. I hastened down to meet him.

"I began to be alarmed," he laughed. "Thought you had strayed into a world beyond. The lordly barouche awaits our pleasure."

We were soon on the road, bowling this time towards the port, which I wanted to see. It was out of our way, but time, as the advertisements say, was no object to us.

On this charming bit of new road we passed many of the curious

wells of the island, which are as ancient-looking and as picturesque as anything to be found in Mallorca. Fields of abundant wheat contrasted with the green hills beyond them. Reapers, men and women, were cutting down the corn, singing the wild music of the island. The men had hung their garments upon the trees, where they looked like so many forms under execution. The women, bare-footed and bare-legged, had taken off their shoes and stowed them away, whilst their stockings adorned their arms and hands—looking very much like the long gloves that ladies wear in England; and they were about as graceful in their effect. It was quite funny to see them. I wonder if stockings are ever put to such uses in any other part of the world?

The sea presently opened up, blue and shimmering, and lovely beyond a dream. A calm haven, running far up into the land, was sheltered by a basin of rich, green, undulating hills. Few vessels were visible. It is not a port for any great amount of commerce, with quays and piers, but chiefly for small fishing-boats belonging to the inhabitants of Andraix. At least such was my impression, and to-day it seemed as if even fishing-boats were few in number, for very few were visible.

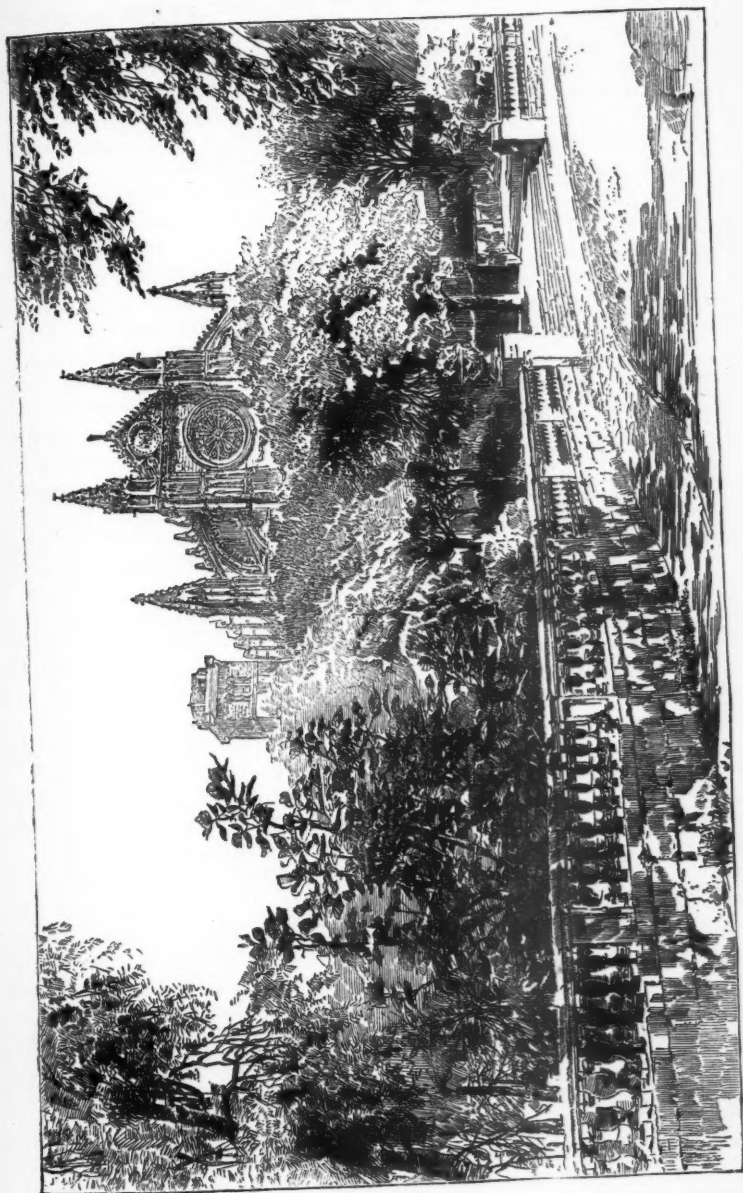
It was a delightful panorama; one of those quiet scenes that fall soothingly upon the spirit, and linger long in the memory. Near the edge of the water where we went down, men were busy at a mill, cutting and planing wood, whilst their long saws sent forth a swishing sound, and scattered the scented sawdust around. A little dog left her litter of puppies, and barked away at us, and evidently considered our appearance an intrusion; but when a great black cat appeared on the scene, with a note of interrogation plainly visible in her yellow eyes and erect tail, the cowardly little dog scampered back to her basket and became invisible.

We soon followed this good example, and turned our faces homewards. The shadows were beginning to lengthen when we entered the now very familiar streets of Palma.

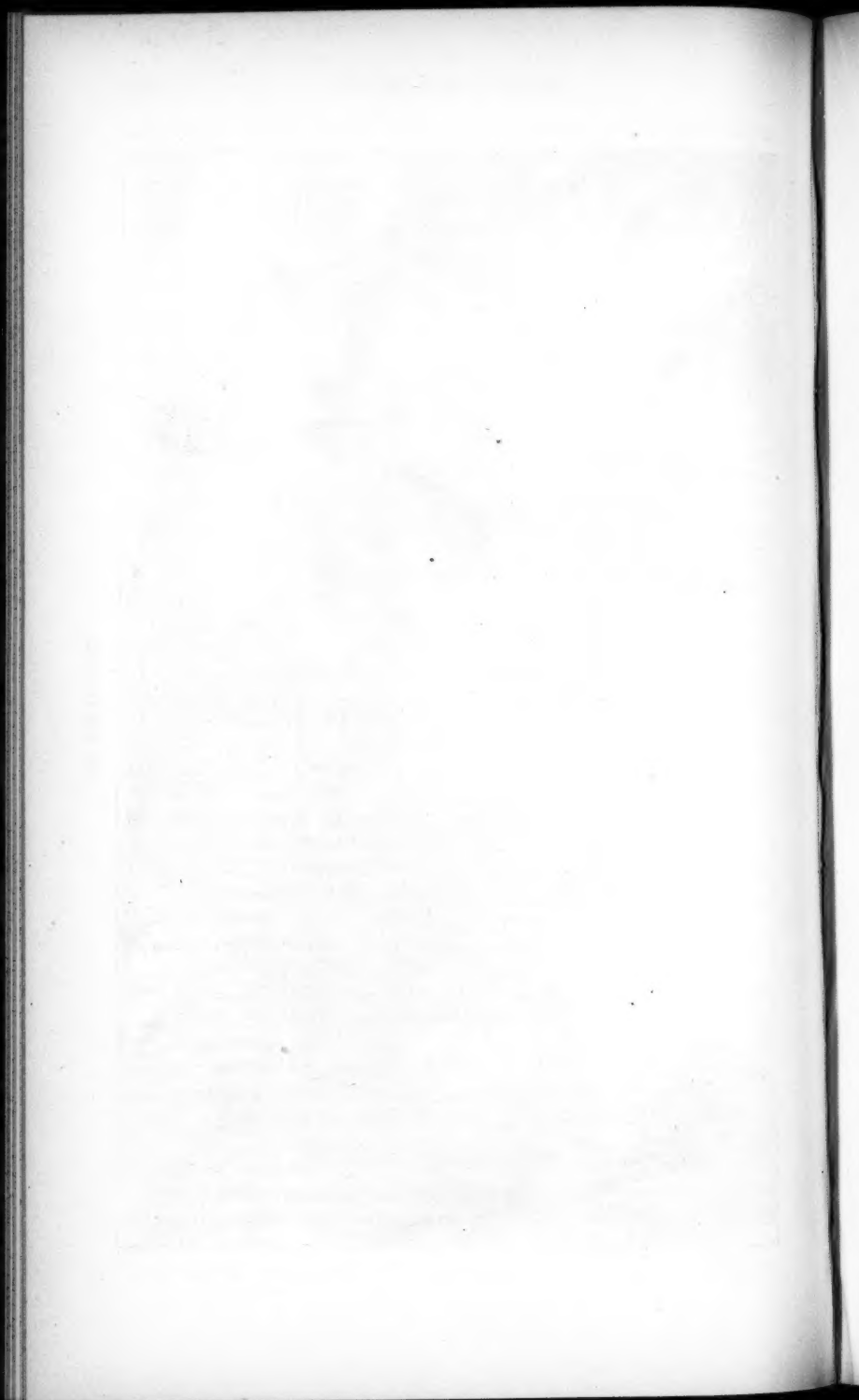
The next day we went to Banalbufar—a longer, more serious, still lovelier excursion. It lies to the north of the island, and its northern part is not only the most favoured of Mallorca, as I have before told you, but one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world.

A.'s headache still continued, and he was beginning to look really ill. I begged him to put off our excursion, but he declared that he should be better out in the open-air than shut up in the old Palace, or lying down with nothing to contemplate but the black effigies of Cleopatra the First and Cleopatra the Second. So when the barouche arrived, we started.

This time we were not to be starved. A huge hamper had been packed by Catalina, and was in the safe keeping of James, who, perched up on the box beside the driver, had much the best of it as far as seeing the country was concerned. For ourselves, buried in



ON THE BOURNE.



our hood, what we could not see, we imagined. A. was unable to stand the sunshine.

The country was clothed in all the richness of summer. Hills rose on our right, given up to olive-yards and vineyards, and abundance of almond trees. It is one of the most fertile districts of this wonderfully fertile island, and from Banalbufar itself comes the best wine of the country. On our right was a stream, now pretty-well dried up. We passed a village nestling under the hill, whose gray houses made it look a thousand years old. Then a turn in the road led up into the mountains.

It was a long, steep drive, and the horses took it leisurely. This we did not mind, for nothing could be lovelier and more romantic than our present surroundings. But for A.'s constant headache, about which I began to have serious though silent fears, our happiness would have been complete.

As we neared Banalbufar, and began a steep descent, the glorious panorama of sea and land lay stretched before us. To our right was the coast of Miramar, the Archduke's territory; and there, reposing in the blue waters, was the lion-like rock on which H. C. and I had nearly come to grief one certain long-passed happy Sunday. I grew melancholy in its contemplation; but, "what has been has been, and none can take it from us." There is some consolation as well as sadness in that incontrovertible fact.

I cannot describe to you with what emotions I once more saw this wonderful coast. We bowled along, the sea far down on our right. Before us lay the village or small town of Banalbufar, and we were soon clattering through its long quiet street. No town in Mallorca is so romantically situated, reposing as it does amongst hills and rocks which stretch far above and below it, for ever in sight and sound of this matchless, ever-surging sea.

Terrace after terrace, slope after slope, is given up to the cultivation of the vine. Nevertheless, the coast is well wooded. Great fir trees are everywhere around, and you may cast yourself into their shady depths on a hot midsummer day and find rest and peace unto your spirit.

Before the open doorways of the houses, nets were hung up, as a protection against mosquitoes possibly, without at the same time excluding the air. But it gave the place a curious look, as of a fishing village taking holiday, and spreading its nets to dry. The women, too, sitting or standing behind them, and peering out at the passing cavalcade, spinning, or idling away the hours, looked like Eastern women of the harem, to whom it was forbidden to show their faces more openly. For they never came out to look after us, and the nets were not pushed aside. Of course this was a mere fancy. The women are no doubt as free to come and go as the birds of the air.

About a mile beyond the village we reached a shaded and romantic

spot where A. had decided that we should bivouac. Here our luncheon was spread on the hill-side, under the trees, away from the world and every vestige of mankind. True, we could see the houses of Banalbufar in the distance, but they were far enough off to be dream houses, or Spanish castles born of imagination. Just below us was a large stone trough, some four yards square, full of sparkling water, fed by an unseen spring, and near this our coachman put up his carriage and stabled his horses.

Below us, on the other side of the road, the slopes running far down to the sea were laid out in terraces, where vines grew in rich abundance. Can you imagine a lovelier scene? Scarcely a beauty of nature seemed wanting. We had it, too, absolutely to ourselves, and this was not one of the least of its charms.

So the moments passed, and with them our Olympian feast; and then I declared that I should stroll down the road and see more of the coast, and A., whose condition seemed to grow rather worse than better, thought a siesta under the trees would, perhaps, do him more good than a walk in the hot sunshine. We parted, and I went my way.

The sun was indeed intensely hot, and presently I threw myself down upon the steep slopes, revelled in a view that I have scarcely ever seen equalled, and plunged into reveries. At last I fell into actual dreamland.

From this I awoke with a horrible sensation of falling, falling down a precipice, only to find it a reality, and myself slipping down the rocks towards the sea. A kindly shrub, at which I clutched as a drowning man is said to catch at a straw, stopped my progress, or it is probable that I should not now be here to write this letter to you. I now found that our allotted time was up, and, with a mental resolve never to sleep again on the edge of a precipice, I turned back in search of A.

I discovered him just where I had left him, none the better for his siesta, but, I thought, decidedly the worse. James had packed up again, and then, having nothing to do, and finding time pass slowly, had set to work and carved all our initials upon a tree, mine largest and most prominent of all. So certain is it that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." There the record will remain till the crack of doom, or at least until the tree falls, and in falling finds its own doom.

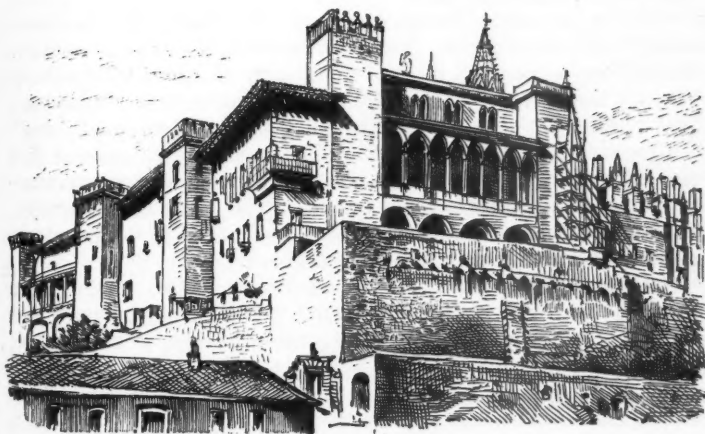
I will not trouble you with any detail of our homeward drive. A. seemed thoroughly done up. Under the circumstances, it was very difficult to revel in the scenes through which we travelled, and certainly it is impossible to rave about them.

So the days have passed, and another Sunday has come round.

This, my second Sunday in Palma, has been spent very differently from my first; but even in our quiet Palma de Mallorca, the days do not always resemble each other.

Yesterday A. seemed so ill that I felt something must be done. I tried to persuade him to see a doctor. I have not very great faith in these Spanish-Mallorcan doctors, but there are times when we have to make the best of circumstances. A., however, would not hear of anything of the sort. It was only a headache, and would pass off. Mr. Bateman came down from Il Tereno, and joined his persuasions to mine. He proposed that A. should go up to Il Tereno to be nursed; there the air was fresh and the views were lovely. But still A. was obdurate. When a man won't, he won't, quite as much as a woman. The utmost he would promise was that if he was no better on the morrow we might then send for a doctor.

The morrow was to-day. This morning saw no change for the



OLD MOORISH PALACE.

better. A. at last gave in, admitted that something must be wrong, agreed to have advice. In came Mr. Mark, full of concern. He has had no experience in illness, and, like many of us under similar circumstances, quickly grows alarmed.

"This is severe sunstroke," he confided to me. "I have told him over and over again that he would have it, and now my words have come true."

"I have an idea that it will prove something worse than sunstroke," I returned. "But he is really a very refractory patient. I begged him not to take his cold bath this morning, and he was so indignant at my offering him advice that he sat for I don't know how long with his feet in iced water."

A half smile crossed A.'s face as I said this, but he was too ill to retort.

"Of course he must now see a doctor," said Mr. Mark. "All doubt about his condition is at an end. He is going to have

something, and as we can't tell what, we must find some one who can."

"What sort of men are these Mallorcan doctors?" I asked.

"Old women ; very nice old ladies," murmured A. "If you want to get rid of me more quickly than you otherwise would, send for them by all means."

"Poor fellow ! Wandering, decidedly wandering," said Mark. "I have the highest opinion of the Mallorcan doctors, and have known them perform wonders."

"So have I," returned A., who shifted his position uneasily every two moments : now sitting up in a reclining chair, now throwing himself full length on a divan. "So have I. Wonders of stupidity.—What about your reception to-day?"

"Ah, by the way," returned Mr. Mark. "It has swelled to dimensions I never anticipated. From half-a-dozen, it has risen to half a hundred and more. All the rank and beauty of Palma will be there. You, my dear A., will not be able to favour me with your presence ; but," turning to me with a polite bow, "you, I trust, will not fail me."

I replied with a due appreciation of his kindness, and assured him that it would be my pleasure to obey. Of course, like the governor of a larger island, he is to some extent Her Majesty's Representative, and we English should hold his wishes in the light of a Command ; especially when they are such pleasant wishes.

"And now," said Mark, "I am off for the doctor. And if there should be no reason against it, I intend to exercise my authority and make you both come up for a few days to my house, where, at least, you will have fresh air. A. will never get better in this gloomy old palace. You are in the very centre of the most unhealthy part of Palma, and there is scarcely any disease that you might not fall a prey to."

"Job's comforter," murmured A., whilst I devoutly hoped this graphic picture was unconsciously exaggerated.

The Consulate, I must tell you, is the most delightfully situated house in the whole of Palma. As one generally does abroad, Mr. Mark occupies a flat in a new house, built with many of the modern improvements. I shall never forget the first time that I saw the view from his window. It was on the occasion of my first visit to Palma, in the winter. I am convinced there are few views in the world to equal it. I had called in the afternoon, and the shutters were all closed to keep out the glare of light, which some people find trying to the complexion.

He threw them back, and I was startled at so much sudden glory. Before us, almost at our very feet, separated only by the ramparts, was spread the Mediterranean in all its grandeur. Far and wide stretched the blue waters, flashing in the warm December sunshine. Small boats, with white-winged sails flitted to and fro. Across, to the right, rose far-off hills. Nearer, were the heights of Bellver,

crowned by the ancient historical castle : a castle that has seen strange revolutions, and within whose walls, from time to time, have transpired deeds of nameless cruelty. Below it, stretched the white picturesque houses of Il Tereno : a district to which the inhabitants of Palma fly in summer for refuge from the terrible heat of the town. Here there is always a breeze : it is ever more or less cool and agreeable. Yet further beyond it rose the lighthouse and little harbour of Porto Pi ; smaller, but far more romantic than the harbour of Palma itself. Far away stretched the land, point beyond point, until the last point melted in a hazy distance, and sea and sky seemed to blend and lose themselves in each other.

All round the coast might be traced the exquisite white edge of the water, and one could imagine its soothing, plashing sound, as it rolled and rippled over the white sand, or gently broke at the foot of the red rocks which abound on the shores of this lovely island.

Immediately below us was the garden belonging to the house. Mr. Mark takes no interest in it, nor, apparently, does anyone else. It is very much of a wilderness, yet a wilderness of beauty. Palm-trees wave their feathery crests, and flowers blossom amidst a confusion of shrubs and brambles. I am sorry to have to record it, but this lovely wilderness seems to be the haunt and abode of numerous progenies of cats. I never look over into this garden without seeing a small army of them stealthily prowling about after the manner of their kind, as if they were all so many scouts or outposts on the watch for an enemy.

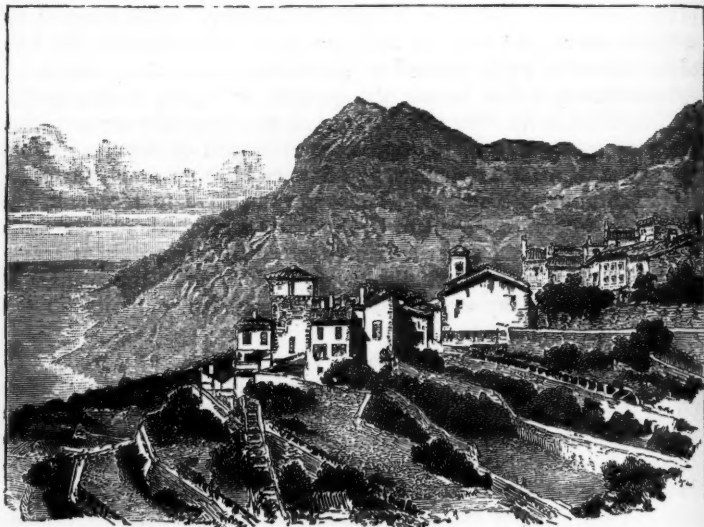
Within, the rooms are charming. They open into each other, and from end to end you have a long vista terminating in two rooms fitted up as conservatories, cool and lovely with well-trained ferns and drooping creepers, the gorgeous flowers of this matchless southern clime. Mr. Mark has also a magnificent collection of old curiosities—Majolica plates, ancient brass lamps, old and wonderfully-carved wood-work, in the form of coffers and cabinets. His walls and doors and tables literally groan with his collection, which he has arranged with great taste. It is difficult to go about his rooms without breaking the tenth commandment and envying your neighbour's goods. You would think that he had ransacked all the bric-à-brac shops of Palma for a century past, and exhausted them for a century to come.

When Mr. Mark proposed that A. should for a few days transfer his quarters from the old palace to such rooms as these, I felt the wisdom as well as the kindness of the thought. In our old palace we are certainly in danger of suffocation. Large though the rooms are, the heat from the opposite houses seems to radiate upon us with irresistible force. Of breeze and fresh air we have none—can have none. At the Consulate, on the other hand, regularly every morning, all the year round, a breeze springs up at ten o'clock, cool and delicious, and almost invigorating. This is another reason why Mr. Mark has been so fortunate in securing his

present quarters. Anywhere else, Palma, all the year round, would be unendurable.

But when he included me in the invitation, I felt that it would be too great a trespass. We should become an invasion; houses will not expand on demand; and I was not suffering from a mysterious and constant headache. But I said nothing for the moment. Events should take their course. First and foremost we must see the doctor and hear his opinion. He might not allow his patient to be moved.

Mark departed, but the morning passed and no doctor arrived; and when, about four o'clock, I left A. worse than ever, and went off to the Consulate, still no doctor had made his appearance.



BANALBUFAR.

"How is he?" was Mr. Mark's first question. "What says Dr. M.?"

"Dr. M. hasn't been," I returned; "and A. seems to grow worse every hour."

"Very strange! But doctors here are a little slow and uncertain. Shouldn't wonder if he's there now. What do you think it can be?"

I shook my head wisely. This was an oracular and safe answer, capable of any interpretation. It is as well never to hazard an opinion when you are in doubt.

"I'm afraid so," said Mark. But what he was afraid of, or what he read in my shake of the head, I could not tell. Then he went off to fulfil his duties as host.

The rooms were already full of a well-dressed assembly: the rank and fashion of Palma. They have a curious custom here. The

married ladies keep to one corner of the room, the married men to another, the single ladies to a third corner, and the single men to a fourth. If there were a fifth order of beings, I don't know what they would do. In some of the very poor houses in London four families will occupy a room, one in each corner, and from motives of economy a lodger will be taken in in the middle; but in polite society this does not happen.

All the ladies to-day were in one room. Many of them were richly dressed, and many of the girls were pretty and graceful, with their mantillas and head-dresses and dark flashing eyes. Some of these mantillas were of white lace, cunningly disposed about the head;



THE PALM TREE OF ANDRAIX.

and these, I believe, are only worn on special occasion, when they wish to pay a particular mark of honour and respect to their host.

The outer rooms were crowded with men, many of whom had curious ways and manners; and I confess that, pleased as I was to look on and have this opportunity of seeing a little of Palma society, I was not in the least inspired with a desire to become intimate with them. There was a Spanish man-of-war in the bay, and some of the most curious specimens in the room were two of the lieutenants, who looked exactly as if they had descended from monkeys. One wondered how they would behave in battle: whether they would climb the masts and throw cocoa-nuts at the enemy.

I was disappointed at hearing no music. In place of this there was dancing, but it was curious and not very graceful dancing. Somehow, dancing by daylight never does seem very graceful. To an Englishman, too, dancing in a tropical heat is not to be atoned

for by any number of ices. In England, of course, we do not dance on a Sunday afternoon, but over here it is a different thing. I could not quite see the pleasure of it; for as soon as the dance was over, the young lady was immediately conducted to her corner by her cavalier, and taken leave of with a bow.

The married or single men, too, are not allowed to talk to the married ladies; it is contrary to the rules of the island; so that the ladies here are very much in the position of the ladies of a Turkish Harem, with very little more liberty, though apparently free to come and go as they will. A married lady in Palma never goes out alone, and cannot do so.

To-day, I need not say that Mrs. Bateman shone out conspicuously as the only Englishwoman and the only really well-dressed in the room. After all, no woman in the world knows how to dress as perfectly as an English gentlewoman.

Mr. Bateman had asked me about A., and I had replied that the doctor had not yet been; at the same time informing him of Mr. Mark's proposition that we should for a few days take up our abode at the Consulate. "For my own part, I feel that I cannot do this," I added. "It would be an invasion, and Barbara might reasonably become rebellious."

Barbara is the genius who presides over Mark's bachelor establishment. She is of an age when people do not like to be put violently out of their ordinary lines. But she is a character; an original; with a face as hard as steel, though as honest as the day. I believe there is a fund of dry humour in Barbara, but alas, I cannot reach it; we cannot speak each other's language. I am much taken with Barbara.

"You are quite right," returned Bateman. "I think it would be rather an irruption upon the Consulate. I am going to the Albufera to-morrow for four days. It is a part of the island you have not seen, and I think you would find a good deal to interest you. If you will accompany me it will give me great pleasure. In the meantime, A. can come up here. Probably the change will put him right, and by Thursday you can both return to that gloomy old dungeon of a palace. I told A. at the time that he was mad to take it. If he cannot return on Thursday, then I hope you will come up and stay with us at Il Tereno."

This was most kind, and the very manner in which the invitation was given made it infinitely more acceptable. I promised, at any rate, to accompany him to the Albufera: and not very long after this, anxious about A., I took my leave.

Arrived at our old palace, with its deep, overhanging eaves, I found an old gentleman gazing about him, looking very lost and helpless. I thought this was possibly Dr. M., and waited a moment, but my heart rather sank within me. He came up to me. "Vous êtes Monsieur Wood?" he asked, and I wondered how he knew me, or my name, or anything about me.

I conducted him through the courtyard up the old stone staircase, and introduced him into the presence of his patient. A. looked very ill; was evidently suffering terribly; and I felt more and more anxious about him. Illness in a foreign land, at the mercy of foreign doctors, always seems to me to be three chances to one against recovery.

Well, Dr. M. went through the usual routine: felt the pulse, looked at the tongue, touched the head, sounded the lungs. Luckily he talked French; a limited French, but still enough to get on with. A. of course talks Mallorcan, but A. was almost too ill to talk anything.

"What do you think it is?" I asked nervously.

Dr. M. shook his head, but it didn't go down with me as mine had gone down with Mark.

"I don't understand," I said.

"Very bad headache," replied Dr. M. "That is certain."

Point No. 1, I thought. Shall we arrive at Point No. 2? "What next?" I enquired.

"It may be sunstroke," said Dr. M., "and it may not be sunstroke. It may be better to-morrow, and it may be worse. He may be going to have fever, or he may be going to have something else."

This was too much. "In short," I said, laughing, but really exasperated, and quoting again the silly old German saying: "Kann sein, Kann auch nicht sein, Kann doch sein! What is to be will be."

"I don't understand English," returned Dr. M., severely. "I beg that our conversation be confined to French." It was German, of course, but never mind; it was equally the same to him.

"Don't put the old fellow out," said A., who could not help smiling. "He might poison us, you know—for, after this, I shall make you take half the physic he prescribes. I told you these Mallorcan doctors were nothing but old women. I might just as well consult old Catalina, our cordon bleu, as you persist in calling her."

Of course you must bear in mind that we are both a little prejudiced; yet not very much so.

"What do you advise?" I asked Dr. M. in my most deferential manner, for I really did not want to be poisoned. "A. sat with his feet for half-an-hour this morning in cold water. What do you think of that?"

Dr. M. tapped his forehead. "Perfectly mad," he cried. "You must put your feet into *boiling* water," he declared, with the first approach at energy he had yet shown: "and then you must go to bed and take gruel."

Then he wrote out some hieroglyphical prescriptions, and retired, promising an early visit the next morning.

Thus rests the matter. After Dr. M.'s departure, A. declared he should not put his feet into boiling water, should not go to bed, should not take gruel. I do not argue with him, for I feel it would be useless. He himself thinks that he has caught a slight sunstroke and that a few days will put him right again. I have great doubts

upon the subject, but I will not be a prophet of evil. Certainly out here it would be worse than folly to meet trouble half way. To-morrow, if there is no great change for the worse, and he can be moved, he will go up to the Consulate, whilst I and Mr. Bateman shall be wending our way to the Albufera. What the future has in store for us, the future must disclose. It is now the small hours of the night; we are steeped in silence; would I could hope that A. is steeped in repose. No sound breaks upon my ear other than the scratch of my pen travelling over the paper, and the melancholy call of an imprisoned quail. For the first time to-night these great rooms and echoing walls are creepy with shadows and fraught with omen. But from their silence and gloom, my sister, sitting as I know you are with Sorrow for your companion, I waft you a far-off benediction.



RONDEAU.

LONG ago, when youth was gay,
We two dreamed our lives should grow
Like two flowers in one sweet May—
And we told each other so.
You have gone: Time's fingers gray
Blind my eyes with showerèd snow:
Hope and youth look far away—
Long ago.

Yet the summer winds, I know,
Will blow soft, one perfect day,
Melt the snows and roses strow:
"Ah, what cold winds used to blow
When I was alone," you'll say—
"Long ago!"

E. NESBIT.

JARRETT'S JUBILEE.

By WALTER HELMORE.

TWO straggling rows of old houses ; a church ; a pump. Such is the village of Dinley, in Essex.

It was towards this romantic spot that a worn-out fly, drawn by a worn-out horse and driven by a worn-out man, made its way on a bright May morning of the year 1887.

Inside the fly sat an old man of some seventy winters—nothing in his unhappy face suggested summer—who, from time to time, would put his hoary head out of the window and urge the man on the box to quicken the four-miles-an-hour pace at which both horse and driver seemed content to jog on.

"If you don't go on a little faster than this, I may as well get out and walk," he exclaimed in wrath, as his head went out of the window for about the twentieth time.

"It's all right, sir," answered the man ; "here we are."

With these words he brought the conveyance to a standstill.

The spot on which he had stopped was opposite the first house you come to on entering the village of Dinley from the south.

"Wait here," said the old man, as he alighted from the carriage.

"Shall you be long ?" asked the driver.

"I don't know," was the only answer that came from the traveller's lips, as, with sturdy steps, he made his way towards the church, which stood at the end of the one and only street in Dinley.

As he progressed upon his journey, however, the old man's pace became slower, and the few inhabitants of the village who saw him pass, had they looked more closely into his face, might have detected a tear trickling down the careworn cheek.

"There's the old cottage," he muttered to himself, as he passed in front of a neat little dwelling, with flower-pots in the windows. "I wonder who lives there now ? I haven't the heart to go and ask."

A few more steps brought him to the church—as hideous a building as the Protestants of the eighteenth century have produced (this is saying much)—and now the tears, which he had tried to keep back during his walk, would no longer remain under the partial control he had, until now, held over them.

"It's no good," he sobbed ; "I can't help it. She said that one day I should weep for my sins, and she was right."

He opened the gate which led into the churchyard, and made his way along a little path to the other side of the church.

Here he paused and began to look at the monuments and tombstones, evidently bent on finding some one particular grave. At last he came upon what he was in search of, as his exclamation proved.

"Ah, this is it!"

He had stopped in his walk opposite a large grave. On the tombstone were to be found, in various phases of legibility, the following inscriptions:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
JOSEPH JARRETT,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE 12TH JULY, 1847,
IN THE SIXTY-SECOND YEAR OF HIS AGE.

—
ALSO TO
ANN,
WIFE OF THE ABOVE, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
ON THE 1ST FEBRUARY, 1850, AGED 65.

—
ALSO TO
JAMES JARRETT,
SON OF THE ABOVE,
WHO FELL ASLEEP DECEMBER 21ST, 1857, AGED 41.

—
ALSO TO
JOSEPH,
ELDEST SON OF JOSEPH AND ANN JARRETT, OF THIS PARISH,
WHO WAS LOST IN THE WRECK OF THE *Selkirk*,
10TH MARCH, 1861.
R. I. P.

"Lost in the wreck of the *Selkirk*," muttered the old man. "I sometimes think to myself it would have been better if I had gone down with all those good chaps."

His thoughts now flowed into a fresh channel.

"I don't see Mary's name; it's odd. Can she have survived all my cruelty and neglect? Surely they would have buried her here."

"And yet," he went on, "I don't suppose the old place had many attractions for her after our last parting, when I——"

The sound of a footstep upon the gravel path put a stop to the old man's musings. He turned round to see who the new-comer might be.

Walking very slowly along the way he had just come was an old woman. She was some distance as yet from the Jarrett grave, so he could not, through his tearful eyes, distinguish her features. Realising, however, the fact that she was likely to pass the place where he stood, the old man hastily retired to a spot close by, which was more hidden by the budding trees. It was his intention to remain here till the woman had passed by the grave which gave him so much interest, and when she had gone, renew his meditations over the tomb of his relatives.

What was his surprise, however, when the old lady paused at the foot of the grave he had just been looking at.

"Why," he exclaimed, "she is going to my grave, and——"

He came to an abrupt stop. The woman had seated herself, and was placing a wreath of bright flowers just beneath the inscription which spoke of the loss of Joseph Jarrett in the *Selkirk*. Till now her eyes had been fixed upon the ground, but as she completed her little memorial act, she raised her head as if to ask a blessing on the soul of the shipwrecked mariner.

The man started back with an exclamation of surprise.

"By heaven! It's Mary!"

He steadied himself by clutching the railings of an old family tomb which stood among the trees, and stared at the woman, who was still unconscious of his presence.

"What should he do?" he asked himself. Should he rush abruptly forward and say: "Here is your husband! Here is the man to whose memory you are paying tribute; whom you, years ago, chose out of *all* the young men who were eager to make you their bride?"

The woman was too much absorbed in her pious task to give a thought to the possibility of there being any observer close at hand. Joseph Jarrett was able, therefore, to leave his hiding-place and approach the grave which bore his memorial on its stone without disturbing his wife's meditation.

It was a curious position these two found themselves placed in; the woman, reading the inscription which told her of her husband's death; the husband, standing behind her, *alive* and well.

Providence is ever merciful. Two souls, at last worthy of each other, and beating hearts, awakened to the fact that union is their only chance of true happiness, *must* meet.

The man was the first to break the silence.

"I beg your pardon ——" he began, but a lump in his throat prevented further utterance. The woman's eyes were filled with tears.

"I didn't know anyone was about," she said, as she tried to hastily brush away the traces of her sorrow.

"I shouldn't have disturbed you," said Jarrett, "only I came to this churchyard to ——"

"To what?"

The man paused a moment, and then plunged abruptly in *medias res*.

"I came here," he answered, "to see the grave of my old friend, Joseph Jarrett."

His wife started.

"Joseph Jarrett!" she said; "did you know Joseph?"

"Oh, yes; I've been with him on several occasions. I was in the wreck of the *Selkirk*."

"Oh, you were one of the few who were saved from the wreck?"

"Yes."

The memory of the disaster seemed to silence Jarrett. His wife looked enquiringly at him, and then said:

"Did Joseph ever say anything of friends—of relations of his that he had left in England?"

"Why, yes, he often spoke of the wife he had so cruelly deserted."

"Poor Joseph!"

A slight quiver agitated the muscular frame of the old man. He overcame his emotion, however, and continued:

"Jarrett, you see, had a lot to answer for. He behaved like a scoundrel to his poor wife——"

"He's dead now," interrupted Mrs. Jarrett; "and I think, if he was your friend, that you might do better than say anything against his memory."

"Well, he was a bad man, was poor Joe."

"No, he wasn't. He may have been wild, and perhaps weak, but his heart was good."

The old man's face brightened up at these kindly words, but he continued his sweeping criticism of Joseph Jarrett's memory.

"I can't see," he said, "how anyone can excuse Joe's conduct. He was only a worry and anxiety to his poor wife, and *he* knew it right enough."

"Perhaps the wife didn't do all in her power to make him happy?"

"She was an angel!" exclaimed Jarrett. "Far too good for the likes of Joe."

"How do you know?" exclaimed the old woman.

"Well, you see," he answered, "Joseph and me were pals, and many a time would he speak of her and the past. Often and often he's said to me, 'If ever I am taken away, her path in life will be smoother.' Why, I remember, when the *Selkirk* was being dashed about like a cork on the angry waves, Joe's thoughts were this, that heaven had sent the storm to free his wife from a bad husband."

"Joe's thoughts?"

"Yes, he told them to me."

"Ah! How little he knew me!"

"You!"

"Yes, I am Joseph Jarrett's widow."

The man had been waiting for this communication.

"Do you ever think that you would have been glad to see Joseph before he met—with his—sad end?"

Mr. Jarrett had some difficulty in completing his question.

"Glad to see Joseph! Why, for all these long years I have had a sort of aching feeling here"—she touched her heart—"to think that he passed away without my being able to say to him, 'Joe, I want to make you happier. In the past I worried and scolded and tried to

drive you, but now let us turn over a new leaf, and try to lead each other instead."

"But would Joseph have listened to such good words, wouldn't he have gone back to his old tempestuous life——?"

"Ah! You don't know Joe's heart."

"I don't!"

He stopped abruptly and then turned to his wife.

"Can you bear to hear some news which concerns you and Joseph?"

She hesitated and looked earnestly in her husband's face.

"Joe!—My Joe!"

The truth had suddenly flashed upon her.

Two hours afterwards, Jarrett and his wife were seated, side by side, in the cosy cottage.

"Joe," said the old woman, as his protecting arm was drawn more closely round her, "do you know what to-day is?"

"Yes, dear, our Golden Wedding. I came back to England on purpose to visit the grave to-day; but, thank God, where I expected to find the dead, I found the living."

"And you'll never leave me again, Joe?"

"Never; this is our Jubilee-day, and, from henceforth, I pray that I may never part from you."

"Our Jubilee, Joe! No monarch ever had such a happy Jubilee as ours."



MY WICKED ANCESTRESS.

WITHOUT: Fog, drifting in dim wreaths of sooty vapour between my dirty windows and the dismal frontage of the opposite side of a street of superior lodging-houses.

Within: A fire smouldering under a mountain of slack; chairs and tables and a looking-glass murkily reflecting my melancholy self, an Army List and a yellow envelope.

In the distance, the departing wheels of my doctor's brougham faintly audible for some moments longer; then silence, but for the ticking of the clock and the distant cry of an evening paper vendor.

"No organic disease," my doctor—my sole friend in London—had pronounced some ten minutes ago: "Considerable derangement of the nervous system: want of tone," etc. "Haven't you any friends who will give you a mount during the hunting season, or can't you get some shooting somewhere?" were the good man's last suggestions, with "Doesn't *anybody* want you for Christmas?" by way of post-script.

Wanted! save the mark! When had I been wanted in all my life? Not from my birth. That had been decidedly inconvenient to a gay young couple with limited means and a taste for society. Later on, in my school-boy lifetime, I was even less welcome, though the days of my parents' poverty were over. My pretty little baby-sister, who had judiciously deferred her advent for six years after mine, was quite as much of "a family" as my graceful young mother cared to produce. I was too big, too ugly, and, I am afraid, too out-spoken to be a desirable addition to her home circle.

I don't think I was wanted in my regiment when I joined, being quiet, poor and unsocial; not a type cherished by the gallant 200th.

I was still one too many when my father died; and the remains of his property, when collected and divided into three, proved such a miserable pittance for my mother and sister that I could but "efface myself" as speedily as possible, resign my claim to a share, and effect an exchange to India.

I think there I had a brief delusion that my existence was necessary to somebody. Once a quarter came an elegant little acknowledgment from my mother of the small allowance my Indian pay enabled me to make her, and now and then was enclosed a schoolgirl scrawl—very cheering and heart-warming to read—from my little sister, Clarice.

I had just got into the way of looking forward to mail-days and trying to make my letters home interesting and provocative of replies, when I received the announcement of Clarice's marriage to somebody in the city; and, directly after, of my mother's engagement to M. le Vicomte de Pignerolles. I despatched the handsomest

pair of wedding presents my finances would allow to Madame la Vicomtesse and Mrs. Van Schendal, and dropped out of their lives, less wanted than ever.

I never meant to return to England. Why should I? I had made some "skin-deep" friendships in India, and stuck to my work there—I really believe because I was wanted at it.

However, they sent me home. "The man's dying, and won't believe it," I overheard the old surgeon say. I *did* believe it, but I didn't happen to care. Not the saintliest recluse could hold more lightly to the things of this world than did I. My days were numbered? Good. It was no wish of mine to prolong or shorten them. I would return to England, get the best medical advice and act on it. I would set my affairs in order—a light labour that—and without either conscious bravado or resignation, await the end.

So now, to carry out my good physician's parting prescription, "Look up some friends," I had announced my arrival to my sister, and had made my way to Van Schendal's office in the city. He was in Amsterdam on business, the big house in Grosvenor Square shut up, and Mrs. Van Schendal away on a round of visits. Madame la Vicomtesse was at Nice; hoped to be in town in May and make me known to her Maxime.

An old brother officer met me and asked me to dinner at the club; and a man I had known and been of some slight service to in India gave me two days' shooting in Lincolnshire. So far I had obeyed my medical friend's orders. I had tried sight-seeing, theatre-going, small expeditions in different directions, but the sense of friendlessness only grew more burdensome, and I had returned, almost gladly, to the familiar hideousness of my lodging-house surroundings.

I stood for some time, I remember, looking out into the sea of swirling dinginess that grew denser every moment, and then, chilled and disheartened, turned to my fire. A cloud of black smoke and a cataract of coal-dust descending into the fender was the sole result of my operations with the poker, so I gave it up and rang for assistance and candles.

"A telegram!" I exclaimed with languid surprise. "How did it get here?" I remembered something being brought into the room while my doctor was with me, but had forgotten the fact. I waited till lights came, and then opened it incuriously.

"From Sir Thos. Waldron, Broadstone, Marlby, Yorks, to Capt. Basil Acton, 14, Atherton Place, London.—Just heard of your arrival. Welcome home. Come to us at once for Christmas, and as much longer as possible."

A full shilling's worth of kindliness, and every word of it genuine. An actual physical glow of warmth and comfort suffused me as I read.

Sir Thomas Waldron is my cousin, the head of our family. He had crossed my path in life several times, and never without doing me some kindness; but that was long ago; and since then he had quarrelled first with my father and then with my mother, and I never expected to be remembered by him.

The invitation touched me deeply. It may seem odd, but had I been free to choose, I should have declined it. I shrank now from forming new ties to life.

"He'll not see the year out," my old Indian Army surgeon had said of me, and I believed him. "No organic disease, no functional derangement," my London friend assured me, with a perplexed face, and I believed him, too. Only a gradual failing of the principle of life—call it what you will. Days of weakness, nights of wakeful torture. I shrank from inflicting myself and my miseries on a gay, hospitable household, such as I imagined the Waldrons' to be, and took pen and paper to send a grateful refusal. Then, moved by something in the very look of the telegram as it lay before me, I hastily scribbled a few lines, telling, as briefly as I could, what it has taken me all these pages to explain, and, mistrustful of my own resolution, sent it to be posted without further delay.

So it came to pass that three days before Christmas I found myself in the train, speeding northwards through clear, keen moorland air; leaving London fog and mud two hundred miles behind.

It was a plunge into a new life to alight at the little station where every creature knew at once that I was come on a visit to Sir Thomas, and took a personal interest in me from that moment. The station-master, the porter, the sedate old coachman who met me with the brougham, the old goody at the lodge gate, all beamed broad welcomes from their honest Yorkshire faces.

The stately ranges of windows twinkled hospitably in the southern sunlight, and under the portico stood waiting my cousin Thomas himself, his grey hair blowing about in the wind, and his blue eyes shining with cordial greeting.

"My dear fellow! I am glad to see you. Come in, come in! Ismay, my dear! Here he is!" and he led me into the hall where Lady Waldron was waiting.

Two soft little hands were put into mine, two clear dark eyes shone on me like kindly stars, and before the sweet low voice had ceased the music of its welcome, I was taken possession of, body and soul, and held captive in a bondage that will last my life.

This is no harrowing romance of love and guilt. I do not covet my neighbour's wife any more than I do the great iron-grey hunter that comes next in his affections. She is old enough to be my mother. Her hair is snowy white, and her sweet old face criss-crossed by many a wrinkle; but Ismay Waldron is one of those born queens of hearts whom age cannot depose, and I am the humblest of her subjects.

"Come and have some luncheon," spoke Sir Thomas, breaking in on my trance of admiration. "We are alone to-day. Everyone gone to a breakfast and drag-hunt at the Barracks. It's quite a treat to have time to speak to one another; eh, Ismay?"

"Let me first show Basil his rooms," she said, "that he may know where to retreat when he has had enough of us."

My bed-room was a queer, many-angled chamber in the corner of the building, looking northward.

"Bad for an invalid, I know," Lady Waldron said, "but we had no other to spare. You must live *here* as much as possible."

She flung open a door into a flood of western sunshine pouring through two large mullioned windows into what was manifestly a lady's boudoir filled with all sorts of feminine prettinesses.

"This is my special den, but I gladly give it up to you. I honestly prefer the children's old school-room. This is to be your kingdom. The bell will summon a servant who is to be your special attendant. Give him your orders. You are to live here and visit us only when it so pleases you. I alone reserve the right of intruding on you. Now you must remember the geography of the place. That door behind the piano is fastened up. It opens into my dressing-room, but I never used it except in summer. The opposite one leads into your bed-room, and this one into the passage, on to which our rooms open (you see my present sitting-room is just across it), and so to the main staircase. You are sure to lose yourself once or twice at first. Nothing in this house ever ends where you naturally expect it should."

We returned to my bed-room, which had another entrance and a separate staircase and corridor all to itself, dim with borrowed lights and ghostly with flapping tapestry, but convenient as communicating with the servants' hall, where my appointed guardian angel, Micklethwaite by name, was to be found.

Much to Sir Thomas's satisfaction, after luncheon I professed myself equal to the inspection of the Home Farm—his pride and delight, and we three set out for a tour of the place.

Broadstone is a low, castellated grey pile, a famous stronghold in its day. The sun, wind and rain of centuries have worked their will on the grim old building, mellowing and softening, crumbling off angles, yellowing the roofs with lichen and hanging the battlements with ivy till it seems to have grown into one with the great crag on which it stands. The Waldrons have held it for generations. May their names be long in the land!

"I see some of our guests have returned," Lady Waldron said, as we passed the lighted library windows. "Had you not better come in and meet them by degrees, instead of en masse at dinner?"

I assenting, we made our way to the open door through which a rush of firelight and gentle clamour of high-bred voices streamed out into the cold dark hall.

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It was a plunge into a new life to alight at the little station where every creature knew at once that I was come on a visit to Sir Thomas, and took a personal interest in me from that moment. The station-master, the porter, the sedate old coachman who met me with the brougham, the old goody at the lodge gate, all beamed broad welcomes from their honest Yorkshire faces.

The stately ranges of windows twinkled hospitably in the southern sunlight, and under the portico stood waiting my cousin Thomas himself, his grey hair blowing about in the wind, and his blue eyes shining with cordial greeting.

"My dear fellow! I *am* glad to see you. Come in, come in! Ismay, my dear! Here he is!" and he led me into the hall where Lady Waldron was waiting.

Two soft little hands were put into mine, two clear dark eyes shone on me like kindly stars, and before the sweet low voice had ceased the music of its welcome, I was taken possession of, body and soul, and held captive in a bondage that will last my life.

This is no harrowing romance of love and guilt. I do not covet my neighbour's wife any more than I do the great iron-grey hunter that comes next in his affections. She is old enough to be my mother. Her hair is snowy white, and her sweet old face criss-crossed by many a wrinkle; but Ismay Waldron is one of those born queens of hearts whom age cannot depose, and I am the humblest of her subjects.

"Come and have some luncheon," spoke Sir Thomas, breaking in on my trance of admiration. "We are alone to-day. Everyone gone to a breakfast and drag-hunt at the Barracks. It's quite a treat to have time to speak to one another; eh, Ismay?"

"Let me first show Basil his rooms," she said, "that he may know where to retreat when he has had enough of us."

My bed-room was a queer, many-angled chamber in the corner of the building, looking northward.

"Bad for an invalid, I know," Lady Waldron said, "but we had no other to spare. You must live *here* as much as possible."

She flung open a door into a flood of western sunshine pouring through two large mullioned windows into what was manifestly a lady's boudoir filled with all sorts of feminine prettinesses.

"This is my special den, but I gladly give it up to you. I honestly prefer the children's old school-room. This is to be your kingdom. The bell will summon a servant who is to be your special attendant. Give him your orders. You are to live here and visit us only when it so pleases you. I alone reserve the right of intruding on you. Now you must remember the geography of the place. That door behind the piano is fastened up. It opens into my dressing-room, but I never used it except in summer. The opposite one leads into your bed-room, and this one into the passage, on to which our rooms open (you see my present sitting-room is just across it), and so to the main staircase. You are sure to lose yourself once or twice at first. Nothing in this house ever ends where you naturally expect it should."

We returned to my bed-room, which had another entrance and a separate staircase and corridor all to itself, dim with borrowed lights and ghostly with flapping tapestry, but convenient as communicating with the servants' hall, where my appointed guardian angel, Micklethwaite by name, was to be found.

Much to Sir Thomas's satisfaction, after luncheon I professed myself equal to the inspection of the Home Farm—his pride and delight, and we three set out for a tour of the place.

Broadstone is a low, castellated grey pile, a famous stronghold in its day. The sun, wind and rain of centuries have worked their will on the grim old building, mellowing and softening, crumbling off angles, yellowing the roofs with lichen and hanging the battlements with ivy till it seems to have grown into one with the great crag on which it stands. The Waldrons have held it for generations. May their names be long in the land!

"I see some of our guests have returned," Lady Waldron said, as we passed the lighted library windows. "Had you not better come in and meet them by degrees, instead of en masse at dinner?"

I assenting, we made our way to the open door through which a rush of firelight and gentle clamour of high-bred voices streamed out into the cold dark hall.

A tall girl, with a beautiful figure, in a tight satin gown, formed the centre of a group round the hearth, and was speaking loudly and decisively.

"Guinevere, of course, or Brunhilda. There cannot be two opinions on the subject. Herr von Kreifeldt's golden love-locks and wavy beard are too unspeakably precious in these close-cropped days to be wasted. Is there no other legend of Arthur?"

"Elaine," suggested somebody.

"Who's to be Lancelot? He must be an utter contrast; and where we are to find anybody gaunt and hollow-eyed, and heavy-moustached, and world-weary, and generally bilious-looking enough——"

The speaker stopped short as her gaze met mine; so short that I at once felt an assurance that she was afraid I should consider her remarks personal.

Lady Waldron glided in gently amongst them, introducing me quietly and rapidly. "Captain Acton, Miss Fordyce, Major Grimshaw, Sir Derwent Freemantle, Mrs. Charles Halliday," and some half-dozen more; and then let me sink unobserved into a big chair in a dim corner.

There was to be a fancy ball on New Year's Eve, I found, and it was suggested that some tableaux vivants should precede it, the main difficulty seeming to be that everyone with a dress wished for a tableaux especially designed to exhibit it.

I was dimly amused at it all. The figures and voices seemed to belong to some shadowy region of visions that I was powerless to enter or approach. I felt beyond it all in some way, as though I were a ghostly visitant watching the scenes in which I might once have taken part. Only my cousin Ismay's voice and touch seemed to reach me now and then across the gulf. Then the sounds grew fainter in my ears—the lights dimmer. A deadly faintness seized me, and I struggled to my feet and hurried dizzily from the room. Sir Thomas met me in the hall, and helped me to my own quarters, where he left me under Micklethwaite's care for the rest of the evening.

"I should never have come," I was protesting miserably to myself in a fit of self-reproach after my solitary dinner, when the door opened suddenly, and a gracious vision shone in on me—Cousin Ismay in her shimmering satin and soft old lace.

"You did too much for your first day," she said. "No, don't stir. We don't know how to take care of invalids in this house. No one has ever ailed anything since Steevie came home from Oxford with a broken collar-bone."

I don't know how it came about, but ten minutes later I was talking to her as I had never done to mortal in my life before, telling her thoughts and feelings that I had never dreamt of putting into words, led on by the magnetism of her dark, kind eyes. She sighed

when I ceased, but made no effort to contradict or soften my last words. "I am a dying man, Cousin Ismay, and your goodness only makes me feel that there is something in the world that I might have prized and lost."

"And Clarice?" she asked.

I smiled, not bitterly, but indifferently.

"Does Clarice count for nothing with you? Dear girl! I have been looking forward to your home-coming so much on her account. If only you were always at hand to fill a want in her life, as no one else can."

"I! Clarice!" I exclaimed, in blank amaze.

"Poor little child! we all love her very dearly. It is through her we seem to have known you so well all these years. You have been her hero, her ideal, from her childhood. I think she chafed impatiently under the idea that your life and prospects were crippled to support her lately, and that your mother rather worked on the feeling in Mr. Van Schendal's behalf."

I gave an impatient start; but Ismay went on composedly, gazing thoughtfully at the fire.

"He is a good sort of man in his way: kind to her, but immersed, body and soul, in his business, and she is such a child—poor, lonely Clarice! How glad she will be to come here to us!"

I sat too stupefied to ask more, and Cousin Ismay presently left me to muse, with a pang of bitter sweetness, that there were more in the world to regret me than I should have counted on.

I strove hard to repay my host's kindness next day by resolutely abandoning all semblance of invalidism; went with Sir Thomas to the County Town, on magistrate's business, in the morning; drove with Ismay, and some of her guests, to an "At Home" in the afternoon, and actually promised to ride to the meet next day.

"I'll find you a *very* quiet mount," Sir Thomas said; thereby intensifying my determination to follow the hounds at all hazards.

I faced the dinner-party that evening—a large one, augmented by guests arrived for the Christmas festivities. Miss Fordyce fell to my lot, and I honestly tried to adjust my ideas to hers, with faint success. The rest of the evening I felt I might righteously shirk, and made my way to the library, to say "Good-night" to Sir Thomas, who had some writing to do there. I found the room empty, however, and dropped into an arm-chair by the fire, awaiting him in a lazy, pleasantly tired, frame of mind and body.

That red curtain? I hadn't noticed it before. Had it been drawn across the picture since I was last in the room? Or had the corner always been in shadow till that big log split asunder and rolled on the hearth in flaming fragments?

There was a family portrait, dingy and indistinguishable, in each of the other recesses between the book-shelves. What did this frame hold? What concern was it of mine? Something old and classic,

as valuable as improper, I supposed. I was quite awake now, sitting bolt-upright and staring at the thing. I might just as well get up altogether, and settle my mind by crossing the room and drawing the curtain. I would.

Bah! What *is* there in the touch of red velvet that should make me shudder and sicken? I could no more grasp that curtain strongly and draw it aside than I could touch a slimy reptile without a qualm. What ails my nerves? Over-wrought, most certainly; or why do I stand gazing blankly at that veiled picture: nailed to the spot, yet with a sense of mysterious dread and repulsion thrilling every nerve?

Here Sir Thomas entered briskly, and I turned to him.

"What is that?" I asked briefly.

"That? Oh, nothing, nothing!—an old family portrait: a shocking bad one. You don't want to see it, eh?" he said hurriedly.

"But I *do*—most particularly."

Sir Thomas thrust his hands into his pockets, and took an impatient turn up and down the room, visibly bothered.

"Tut, tut! What will Ismay say? *She* so particularly said you mustn't. Now *what* do you want to see it for?"

"I don't know; only I feel as if I should have no peace till I did."

"Oh, come; that settles it," and he extended his hand to the curtain—then withdrew it suddenly. "Ismay said something about your nerves, I know. Now, *do* you think it can do any harm? All of us but you have seen it, and nobody is any the worse," and again he approached his hand, hesitatingly, this time. "Of course, the legend is all bosh, you understand. *You* don't believe it?"

"How can I tell when I don't know it?"

"Oh, then, it's all right!"

And Sir Thomas, evidently relieved in mind, pulled aside the velvet folds, disclosing a faded canvas.

Only a girl's portrait—a slim young figure, in a dress of the early Stuart period: grey, fur-trimmed, with a silver girdle, at which hung an ostrich-feather fan. Her hair was tucked back under a velvet hood, and in one hand she held a riding-mask. Such were the details, painted with little art, but none could dwell on them, so agonizingly realistic was the expression of horror in the large grey eyes and drawn mouth.

A face to haunt one, not from any beauty of its own—a face of one stricken to death or madness by some ghastly terror.

I shuddered and turned away, and Sir Thomas dropped the curtain.

"Who is it?" I asked, with an effort.

"Bless me! Do you mean to say you never heard of her? Our (and your) great-great-great-great-great-great—yes, that's right, six greats—grandmother, Lady Sybilla Waldron, the beautiful young woman who bewitched our great-great-etc.-grandfather, and played the

deuce's own game with the property. An abandoned young hussy! She shut the poor old boy up in one of the towers while she and her disreputable crew of acquaintances held high jinks in the place. There was a handsome young scapegrace, son of the steward. Well, well, it's an ugly bit of family history—they say she went mad after her baby was born, and I'm sure I charitably hope so," blundered Sir Thomas. "Anyhow, it was believed that she meant to dispose of our unlucky old progenitor, and marry him as soon as might be, and some kind neighbour thought fit to send a warning off to the eldest son, her step-son, then serving in the Low Countries. Home he came post-haste. His servant fell ill at York, and he pushed on alone. Crossing the wildest part of Whinstanes Moor, he met with a reception, kindly arranged by his step-mother, that had all but put an end to his military career on the spot. Half-a-dozen armed varlets set on him, but thanks to his admirable swordsmanship and the fleetness of his good grey mare, he escaped them, and arrived at Broadstone in the height of the Christmas merry-making. The neighbours had gathered from far and near to welcome him, the poor old squire doddering feebly about in their midst, with Lady Sybilla at his side, the gayest of the gay."

"A pretty story," I remarked.

"Very! She welcomed her step-son lovingly, led him to receive his half-blind father's blessing, and, with much presence of mind, handed him a goblet of hot spiced wine, into which a special flavouring of her own had been dropped. He bowed courteously and pledged her; but before his lips had touched the cup, there was a clamour without, and two men entered bearing a third, stiff and stark, just as young Waldron had left him on the Whinstanes Moor. It was one of the ruffians who had attacked him, he said. But when they laid him in the light of the fire, then Lady Sybilla gave one awful shriek, and seizing the cup from her step-son's hand, drained it to the dregs, and fell senseless on the body of her lover. She died that night, raving mad. It saved her from a trial for murder and witchcraft, possibly. Anyhow, they buried her respectably in the family vault, and young Waldron stayed at home taking care of the property and his little half-brother, who eventually succeeded to it."

"Then we are descended from her?" I asked distastefully, as Sir Thomas finished the story, which came out with a fluency born of frequent narration.

"Of course we are, or we should never have heard more of her, I suppose."

"Why, what do we hear?"

"There, there! If I haven't let the cat out of the bag! Ismay says I'm never to be trusted! And you, of all people!" Sir Thomas rubbed his white head in vexation, till I expected to see sparks fly out of it. "Not a word to Basil till next week, at least, were her very words!"

"Why next week? And why not to me?"

"Because, don't you see, Christmas will be safely over then, and you won't be able to fancy anything, you know. If you were to suppose you saw her, in your state of health, of course you might go dwelling on it. It's been a legend of the place ever since I can remember. She passes through the house on Christmas Eve, they say, entering all the rooms, and imploring pardon from her descendants. If anyone had presence of mind to bid her 'Go in peace,' why, I suppose that would put a stop to it."

"Then why doesn't someone?"

"Because, you see, my dear boy, nobody can see her. Anyone who does is fated to die before the New Year is in; at least, so they say: but then nobody *has* seen her. Then again, nobody has died, so that disproves nothing."

"Is that all? Well, I don't feel much the worse for it, somehow. I'll not betray you to Lady Waldron; and if my wicked ancestress pays me a visit to-morrow night, I'll keep the fact to myself. I hope I shall remember the appropriate remark!"

"Don't, don't! My dear fellow, for mercy's sake don't talk as if you could possibly do such a thing! What? going already? Good-night, then, good-night. No stars to-night and the barometer gently falling. Ha, ha!"

As I walked down the dimly-lighted passage to my room, I thought how, only a night or two ago, I might have welcomed the fancy that perhaps for me there was a summons on the way from the Shadowland. Only a fancy; yet I had a curious wish that next night were over and the legend discredited.

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky" next morning. A gay breakfast, a lawn meet and a day's sport in every way satisfactory to the M. F. H. and the noble earl whose covers we drew. My "quiet mount" was a knowing old hunter whose sagacity balanced my inexperience and brought me through the day with credit. I was glad to turn homewards as soon as I fairly could, and plodded unsociably back through the muddy lanes long before "Barnabas" thought proper.

I came in unobserved, dog-tired, and had been asleep on my sofa for some time before I was aware of voices close at hand. My cousin Thomas, from his dressing-room, was carrying on a conversation with his wife across the passage, evidently under the impression that they had that part of the house to themselves.

"We shall make a man of him yet. I never despair of any fellow who can ride straight and take a joke. It's rousing he wants—that's all. Can't you find him a wife, Ismay? Eh?—Miss Fordyce? Not a bit of it. You wait and see. I'm going to send him in to dinner to-morrow with that little Carruthers girl——"

Here I sprang from my sofa and softly closed my door on the rest of his benevolent intentions.

All the sudden rush of energy that had carried me through the last two days seemed exhausted. I spent the evening in solitude, except for a bright ten minutes when Ismay beamed in on me, followed by Sir Thomas, jovial and urgent that I should shake off the blues and join them downstairs. "It's enough to give you the horrors, moping up here; you'll get to fancying all sorts of things," with a meaning nod of ominous significance.

I read myself weary, now and then breaking off to think of Clarice, my little unknown sister, whom Ismay's revelations had set in so different a light. It was late before I went to bed; though, judging from the far away bursts of merriment that faintly reached me, long before the rest of the party. I slept soundly, and woke to hear the carol-singers in the courtyard under my window.

As I tried to follow them, the great turret clock slowly struck out midnight over the singers' heads. Its great resonant bell mixed so discordantly with the shrill minor lilt that I half laughed out to myself while waiting patiently for the final stroke.

I started up with the last sonorous boom. What was that step on the floor? Across my dark floor streamed a river of shining moonlight, and bathed in its rays stood a woman, grey and spectral.

I knew her. Her gleaming girdle and fur-trimmed gown, her eyes dilated with sudden terror, and her lips parted with a voiceless cry of agony!

Only for a second could I bear the gaze of the frenzied eyes. I sprang up, speechless in my bewilderment, and dashed forward to seize or strike, I hardly knew which, the phantom; but ere my foot touched the streak of moonlight, it was gone. I saw its white arms tossed wildly in the air; I heard the ghostly rustle of its garments just for one instant; then, stumbling forward into the darkness, I struck violently against the open door of my sitting-room, and nearly fell.

When I recovered myself, all was still and dark. I hastily lighted my candle and commenced a careful and exhaustive search of the two rooms. It proved perfectly fruitless, as I expected it would.

Had I been dreaming? No. I could repeat the words of the carol to which I had been listening, and which was still shrilling itself to an end outside.

Was it a practical joke? Oddly enough, the reason that prevented my searching the corridor also disposed of that theory. Simultaneously with the carols and the clock had commenced the sound of Sir Thomas's voice outside in converse with Ismay. I had gently opened my door and seen her sitting at her writing-table in the opposite room, while Sir Thomas seemed to be wandering in and out, exchanging desultory observations in a lower tone than usual, out of deference to my supposed slumbers.

Their presence effectually guarded my apartments from invasion on that side.

As to the second door of my bed-room, the slightest movement caused such a crazy creaking of its ancient frame, that I had locked it on Micklethwaite's departure that night, and locked it remained.

I put out my light and sank into a chair, startled, yet on the whole rather surprised at myself for not being more excited and impressed. My pulse was beating regularly. There was no tremor in my hand when I held it up before me, black against the moonlight. My head felt clear, my wits alert. I was in a perfectly calm and reasonable frame of mind, and yet, try as I would, I could neither explain away, nor persuade myself of the unreality of my shadowy visitor. Every detail of her appearance rose before me, distinct as a photograph. The great rippling mass of fair hair from which the velvet hood had fallen back, the long white arms flashing up suddenly from out the falling fur-edged sleeves, the silver clasps to her gown and the brodered pouch hanging at her girdle ; just the little variations from the picture in the library that would mark the original, instead of the copy.

Then it was true, the family tradition, and if true——?

I started from my chair impatiently. I *had* fancied that when my summons came I should hail it as a sailor the sight of land ; I should rejoice as a prisoner at the striking off of his fetters ; whereas I felt recklessly, wrathfully defiant. My hold on life grew strong with the clutch of desperation ; a fierce thirst for its joy of which I had lived defrauded seemed to consume me.

"Six days more to live ? Good. Let them pay me for the years I have lost. I spoke half aloud.

A sighing echo from the raftered roof seemed to reply to me as I threw myself on my bed, where I slept heavily and dreamlessly into the morning.

Christmas Day dawned bright and gladsome.

I thought of my pledge to Sir Thomas, and carefully avoided any appearance of singularity. I joined the church-going party, went round with Ismay, assisting in the distribution of her Christmas gifts ; lent a hand at the Rectory Christmas-tree and magic-lantern ; and, courageously descending to the drawing-room just as dinner was announced, offered my arm to Miss Fordyce, to her sovereign amazement. She evidently was not going to waste her fine eyes and powers of conversation on me, and, Major Grimshaw being her other neighbour, I was soon relegated to obscurity.

On my other hand sat a young girl of some eighteen or nineteen summers, whom I heard Sir Thomas address as "Miss Bell," in an un-come-out style of dress, with manners to correspond. At least, she was looking down and blushing so violently, when I noticed her, at the remarks of her neighbour that I could not help lending an ear.

"Deed, and ye are joost overpowering to us puir ignorant bodies, Miss Bell. Why, the puir curate laddie was fain to rin away at

your approach; he judged ye wad be treckling him anent his deveenity, and maybe his metaphheesics. Hech! hech!" spoke he, in a melodious Glaswegian accent, ending with an exasperating cackling laugh that drew all surrounding eyes on him and his victim. Miss Bell suddenly plucked up a spirit, and turned on him.

"Indeed, Professor McCraw, you are quite mistaken. I know nothing of divinity or metaphysics either; and Mr. Pinkerton knows I don't. He was only asking what I had been reading lately, and I told him where I had got to in the 'History of Our Own Times,' and asked what he thought of McCarthy's views of disestablishment," she protested, in a clear, girlish voice.

"And then ye deelevered yourself finely about the land question. Puir Sir Thomas! Ye left him na leg to stand upon. We must have ye in Parliament, Miss Bell."

The girl turned away her head. I could see her eyes were full of tears of mortification, and her voice choked as she tried to reply. I poured her out a glass of water, and she looked at me gratefully.

"You feel the room too hot," I said. "Let me get you some ice."

"It's not that," she said simply. "I was silly and vexed; that was all. It *is* so hard to know what to say to people. I never meant to say anything wrong to Mr. Pinkerton or Sir Thomas, but they were both shocked at me."

"The Rev. Percy Pinkerton *is* easily shocked, I should imagine. Sir Thomas was only pretending," I replied with decision. She looked cheered, and went on.

"I was so glad to meet Professor McCraw. I thought he would have helped me to understand one of his books that I like so much; but he has done nothing but make jokes and try to set everybody laughing at me; and then *I* get into trouble with mamma. She says she wishes I had never been educated at all, sometimes."

"Don't talk to that Scotch brute, then. Let him feed in silence."

"But how can I help it, when he took me in to dinner?"

"Talk to me," was my prompt reply. "There, be quick! He's going to say something else. Here, let us look at this menu card."

"Aw'm thinking ——" began the Professor, with a solemn clearing of his throat.

"Don't turn your head," I whispered; "keep steady."

"Aw'm thinking, Miss Bell, it's joost a question o' ——"

"Oh, I *must* listen to him," said Miss Bell, lifting her laughing brown eyes to mine.

"On *no* consideration! Fix your mind on the entrées."

"Miss Bell! d'ye mind ——" But here Miss Bell threw down her menu and fairly burst into a fit of girlish laughter, so utterly disconcerting to the great McCraw that he refused curried oysters in a voice of thunder, and was speechless for the rest of the repast.

"Oh, I'm such an unlucky girl!" sighed my new friend. "I'm

always doing or saying the wrong thing. The frightful scrapes I get into are past telling. I don't know how I shall ever get on in society—and I am to come out next season."

I tried to look brimful of sympathy. She was a frank, fresh slip of a lass, with hair cut short on a well-shaped little head. Light, soft hair that made downy little curls on her white forehead and in the pretty curve of her slender neck behind her ears. Her eyes were brown, and had the full, unconscious gaze of a child.

"I've only been forty-eight hours in this house and I've offended six people at least, and done some dreadful things besides." She ended her confession, and then sank into silent meditation. I left her in peace for ten minutes, after which she suddenly asked my opinion of the Game Laws, which I gave her, and the conversation flowed briskly for the rest of the dinner.

"Oh, must we go!" she exclaimed, as Ismay rose. "I'm so sorry. I wish *you* might take me in to dinner all the time I am here!"

"I will if I can," I promised her, and she departed; leaving gloves, fan, handkerchief and a bracelet on her chair and under the table. All of which I carefully collected.

When we joined the ladies, Miss Bell was at the piano, labouring through a lengthy sonata, which came to a sudden stop on our entrance, as she jumped off the music stool. There was a general protest.

"I can't go on! It's *too* bad. I don't know why I ever began it," she cried.

"Isabel!" exclaimed her mother, with deep reproach. "Can you do *nothing*? She practises three hours a day, Lady Waldron. I insist on it, and yet she says she hates it!"

"I'll sing—if I must do something," cried Isabel. "I like doing that." And she sat down again, and began in a clear, young, pathetic voice—

"A place in thy memory, dearest,
Is all I ask or claim;
To pause and look back when thou hearest
The sound of my name."

"Good-night, Basil," said Ismay to me on parting. "A merry Christmas to you! I *wouldn't* obey my lord and master, and send you in to dinner with the heiress; but you got on very well, nevertheless."

I went off down my corridor with "A place in thy memory, dearest," ringing in my ears; but as I entered my dark, solemn old chamber, all the past day's doings seemed to slip away from me, and I stood face to face with the fact—One day gone; one day nearer the end. Five days more.

I fumed at my own folly and superstition as I made the calculation, but half in jest pursued it. Then, in another day, I ought to leave. I must not die here. I should write to Ismay; and to Clarice a

farewell from her unknown brother. I could leave both letters with Sir Thomas to be delivered this day week, when all was over. The New Year's Eve tableaux and ball would have gone off successfully, I reflected with grim satisfaction, before the news would reach here. How would they take it? That quaint young person with the brown eyes and frank, boyish ways?

Sunday morning, fair and frosty. Growls from the hunting men, jubilations from the skaters, more church going, and then a moorland ramble in a party a dozen strong, up to some point where the next county could be seen—if that were any object.

"Let me walk with you," Miss Bell had asked at starting, with her odd, shy, abrupt manner. Her thick sealskin hid her angles, and her little fur cap brought out the clear, creamy whiteness of her complexion. The sharp north wind kissed two little rose-blossoms into her cheeks and made her eyes bright. She looked prettier and more ignorant of the fact than I could have thought possible.

We had reached a fine breezy height, and had come upon an upland pool, already skinned over with thin ice, when she turned to me suddenly.

"Why did you say you should not be here to see me skate?"

"I leave for town to-morrow," I answered shortly.

"Then I lose the only friend I possess in this place," she cried despairingly; "just as I was going to show you I *could* do something decently. I have gone through a good deal from Miss Fordyce since I came, and I *was* in hopes of taking it out of her when we got on the ice together. Do stay and see me do it. The ponds will bear by Tuesday."

There was not a trace of coquetry in her direct glance, only honest regret at losing a good comrade. It was a little thing to do for anyone, so I gave the required promise, and she brightened up forthwith and began chattering cheerily. About the good days of long ago, when she had her brother "Algy" for a companion, and all the fun they had together; when *she* was of no importance whatever, and might learn as she liked, or play as she liked, and "life was worth having."

"And now?" I asked sympathetically, for her voice grew unsteady, and her pretty eyes dropped and then lifted themselves to mine, shining through tears.

"Oh, don't you know? Algy died—and I am the unlucky heiress to the great Carruthers property!"

"*You!* Miss Bell?"

"Yes. Isabel Carruthers; that's my name. Didn't you know? Then I wish I'd never told you!"

What did it matter? Poor little woman, she would pass out of my life like the rest. Meanwhile, if she did care for my gloomy company, it was a small concession to make. So we tramped on briskly, and she told me more about herself and her surroundings; of the nun-

like seclusion in which her anxious mother kept her, except when "Daddy" interfered, and let her run wild, took her out, hunting and shooting, and tried to make a good man of business of her; of her secret dread of next season, and her presentation.

"Think of all I have to go through before I marry!" she sighed.

"Marry?" I asked, startled at the incongruousness of the idea.

"I suppose I must, some day," she answered innocently, "after I come out. Mamma has settled that I am to meet him in town. Oh, it's no one in particular. Only someone who will manage the property well and be kind to me, and won't object to being Mr. Carruthers."

She gave her shoulders a shrug, as if to dismiss the subject.

"The New Year's Eve Ball!" she suddenly exclaimed. "Are you not coming back for that? And the tableaux next Friday? You will be here? No! Why, where shall you be?"

Next Friday! It was *too* ghastly. I evaded the question.

"Tell me about your dress. Are you going to act?"

She didn't answer for a moment, and when I looked at her was blushing as redly as when under torture by Professor McCraw.

"I'm to be the Novice in the Guinevere tableaux," she said hastily.

"Dress from Worth; plain, but ever so costly."

The subject seemed distasteful, so I dropped it.

I don't remember much of the next two days. They flew past with fearful speed, pleasant beyond anything I could have imagined. I felt the courage of desperation possessing me, and threw myself into all the amusement going, Isabel aiding and abetting me.

On Tuesday came a pile of letters. One from Clarice, the first that I had received since her brief acknowledgment of her wedding present. A loving outburst of delight at the thought of our meeting. She was giving up all other visits, and speeding northwards as fast as possible. Paul had been so kind. He would write himself to me. I was to stay with them; give up India altogether if I liked, and live with them.

I don't mind saying that here I broke down utterly, and cried like a child over the gorgeous be-crested paper, with the scrawly, untidy writing. Paul Van Schendal's letter was kind and brotherly, if somewhat stiff and business-like, and I laid them down with a pang of regret, stronger than anything I believed it was in me to feel.

Here it was; Wednesday; my last day here. I packed my things, wrote a line to Ismay, and rang for Micklethwaite to order the dog-cart. I had fabricated some story of important business in town to excuse my stealing away like a thief in the night—hence to die. I looked at the reflection of myself in my glass with incredulity. I had never felt so young, so strong, so full of the joy of living. What fatality was on my track with silent, hurrying footsteps? Be it what it might, it must not overtake me *here*. Let me be alone to meet my doom, away from the kind hearts that might grieve for me.

"A place in thy memory, dearest," sang a clear voice outside.

Isabel's! I sprang up and hurried down the corridor to the great staircase. She was flying down two steps at a time as she sang. Into the library she flitted. I following.

"You here!" she cried, facing round on me suddenly. "I thought everyone was skating on the mere, and I had the house to myself. I am stopping at home to receive my dear old daddy, you know; and I thought I *had* a chance of being naughty!"

"How?" I asked.

For all answer she skipped on a chair, and flung back the curtain from the well-remembered picture. I started and winced.

"You wretch!" she cried, addressing it. "I wanted a good look at you. You began all my disasters here. You know all about her, don't you, Captain Acton?"

"Yes," I said, absently; "I believe I do."

"Then I wish you'd tell me. I only know it's something very solemn and dreadful, that one mustn't allude to at Broadstone on any consideration. Oh, I *must* tell you! You'll keep my secret, won't you? I was going to wear a beautiful, real old fancy dress at the ball, worn by my own ancestress, Christian Carruthers. You have heard of her? No! Why, it's a bit of English history; but never mind now. I told Lady Waldron about it, and she seemed put out, and at last brought me here and showed me this. I suppose everybody's ancestors dressed like everybody else's," in an aggrieved tone. "But it was very much like my get-up, and she implored me not to wear it. Sir Thomas would be made dreadfully uncomfortable; take it as a bad joke, and I don't know what. In short, it was just one of my blunders, and it ended in my giving up the dress and being made into a judy, just to show off Miss Fordyce." She came to a sudden pause. "That's all."

"No, it isn't," I exclaimed impulsively. "Tell me, did you *never* wear that dress?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" implored the poor girl, putting her hands to her face, and flying to the door.

I got there first—I caught her hands—I begged, besought, implored. I believe she thought I was mad, for she stood shrinking from me, with the white scared look on her face of the portrait above her.

"I don't know what you mean. You are too good and kind—too much of a gentleman, to tease me. If you please, I would rather not say anything about it—unless it is to do some real good."

"Won't you take my word for it that it is?" I pleaded. She nodded assent, and after a moment's consideration, with quite a new manner, grave and dignified, in spite of her trembling lips, began:

"It was another of my blunders. I wanted to show Lady Waldron my dress, and she told me to put it on and come to her room that night. I waited till the house was quiet, and then ran to her sitting-

room where I always used to find her when I stayed here before. But I got bewildered at finding it dark and empty; and hearing Sir Thomas's voice in the passage outside, I knew there was a door into the dressing-room and tried to find it. And so I—I——"

"Frightened somebody else more than he frightened you, I dare say," I added lightly, trying to jest away the poor girl's obvious misery. "How did you escape Sir Thomas?"

"I rushed out again, right into Lady Waldron's arms. When his back was turned for a moment, she pushed me behind the portière of the opposite room without saying a word, and sat down, pretending to write till he was safely shut up in his own room. She was dreadfully annoyed, and made me promise never to tell the story. Very likely that I should, wasn't it? I had all my hair cut off that very night, for fear anybody should have seen me and might recognise me. And now you have made me break my word, and I can't imagine why."

I dropped her hands; I walked away to the window, and stood staring blankly out. So she had been the ghost in my room after all! Was I relieved—thankful? I don't know. I felt too like an utter fool to take account of any other sensation. Micklethwaite and the dog-cart passed outside. Should I go? Should I stay? Whatever I did, I should do it with a bad grace.—And Isabel?

She was standing as I had left her, gazing at me in forlorn dismay, the corners of her mouth twitching piteously.

"My dear! my dear! what a brute I am! *Don't* look like that. You are a good, kind, brave girl, and I owe you an explanation, only—only—what will you think of me when you hear it?"

"Why, you are not afraid of *my* opinion!" she cried, her eyes beginning to brighten again. "Let us cover up the horrid old creature and say nothing more about her for ever, if you like. There! Now for the explanation!"

I sent the dog-cart away and tore up my letters to Clarice and Ismay. Isabel must have her explanation, and here it is. Dare I give it to her? Ismay has followed me from the ball-room and reads it over my shoulder with a kind smile and a sigh.

"Why not accept the omen?" she says. "Perhaps you only misread it. It may have been a summons to a newer and happier life before the Old Year should end that Isabel was sent to bring you. Nay, I will prophecy that it was so. Hark—the bells! Isabel loves you, Basil, and you love her. You have only to accept your happiness. Come to her, and welcome new life and hopes with the New Year."

And led by her kind hand I go.

MRS. GILL'S GHOST.

(I have written this down word for word as it was told me by the friend to whom it happened, altering only one or two proper names. G. B. S.)

WE knocked off work on that Monday morning at twelve o'clock as usual ; I know that for certain, because the foundry bell was ringing so loud that I could hardly hear father speak.

" Alf," he says " run down to old Mother Gill's, before you come round to dinner, and ask Morris if he has got me the resin I spoke about last week."

I put on my coat and off I went to Mrs. Gill's shop—about ten minutes' walk : a corner shop it is, with a window each side of the door, which is a swing-door and has glass half-way down.

Morris was Mrs. Gill's assistant ; a young man about my own age (I am going on for twenty-one) as lives with her since the death of old Gill, and serves in the shop.

I pushed the swing door as usual, but it was fastened tight and wouldn't move. So I rattled the latch and rapped with my knuckles on the glass.

" Morris is off somewhere, and the old lady has got away at the back of the house," I thought to myself. " If they keep customers waiting in this manner they'll find their takings considerably less at the end of the week."

So I kept on rapping and rattling, and presently I saw the door at the back of the shop open and Mrs. Gill come through, just as if she had stepped downstairs, for the private part of the house lay to the back. She came straight on to the door, and stood facing me with only the glass between us.

" Mrs. Gill," I called, loud enough for her to hear through it, " has Morris got the resin for father that was ordered last Tuesday ? "

You see we knew her pretty well, having lived for years in the neighbourhood, and father dealing with her constantly for things we required in our trade. Mrs. Gill took no notice whatsoever of me ; no, not as much as if I hadn't been there at all, blocking out the daylight on the outside of the glass door. Indeed, she never even met my eyes, but continued to look up into the air as if she were examining the ceiling ; and I craned my neck to see, too, what attracted her.

But I could see nothing, for the shop inside was quite dim, and gets its light chiefly from the door, which, as I say, I was blocking up with my body. The windows are pretty full of goods and not over-clean. The oddest thing of all was a strange kind of light which began to show upon her face, as she held it with the chin tilted

towards me: it was as if a trap-door was opened in the roof of the shop, and light was falling down on her head. You will say, perhaps, that that was the light coming through the glass above my head in the door. Well, it may have been; for I'm not much more than five foot five in height, and the door is a tall, narrow one; but I don't think it was that, myself.

All this while, I must tell you, I wasn't a bit frightened, and I hammered at the door and shouted at the old woman till I was tired and angry. She didn't look any different from usual, having her cap on and her red and black shawl crossed over her shoulders, as I had seen her hundreds of times; and, except for the way she disregarded me, and looked up in the air as if she didn't know I was there and trying to get in, she seemed quite herself. So at last, as she moved back into the shop, I gave the door a last thump, and called out: "You may wait a good while for my custom, Mother Gill!" and went back to my dinner.

Father was a bit annoyed at not getting the resin, but he managed without it for the time. He laughed a good bit at my standing one side of the door and the old lady the other, looking at each other. Only, as I explained to him, she didn't ever look at me, but had her mind full of something else, and that something, I says, "was a crack or a trap in her ceiling!"

So the matter dropped.

On Thursday of that week father and I came through Roper Street, where Mrs. Gill's shop was, together; and father says, "We'll look in on Morris, and tell him the resin isn't wanted now; he's lost his chance this time."

So we walked along to Gill's corner, and there was a crowd of people and a hearse standing waiting.

"Who's dead?" asked father. As for me, I couldn't say a word, for all of a sudden I had come over quite sick and faint, I couldn't tell why.

"Old Mother Gill," said Meadows, the shoemaker, two doors off. "Found dead on her bed on Monday morning, when Morris went up about nine o'clock. Generally, she came down and got the breakfast; but as time went on and she didn't come, he called, and then went up, and found her stone cold on her bed. She must have laid down in her clothes on the Sunday night, and never moved again."

"What day was you here, Alf?" says father, in a low voice, to me.

"Monday, at twelve o'clock," I answers. Meadows went on. "Morris he fetched a doctor, and he said life was quite extinguished. And they locked up the house, and Morris went over to Holloway and brought back Charlotte and her husband—that was Charlotte Gill—and they come in about two o'clock. I hear they're going to keep on the business."

"Didn't they leave no one with the corpse?" I heard father as

I couldn't have asked it myself at that minute to save my life, but I was deadly anxious for the answer.

"There weren't anyone to leave," Meadows said, apologising rather, for many people think a deal of watching a corpse. "You see no one lives in the house, and Morris being an orphan had no one to put in, and there was everything laying about just as she'd a-left it on Sunday, so that it was better just to lock the place up and take the key over to Charlotte, as could act exactly as she pleased, being left sole executioner."

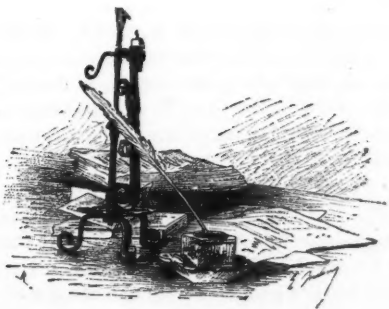
So between the hours of eleven and two on that Monday (allowing full time for the doctor's visit, and Morris' start for Holloway) there was no one in the house but the dead woman !

Just then the coffin was carried out of the glass door, and put into the hearse, and the mourners followed in a mourning carriage, and the procession started. The shop door stood open, and father and I went in with one or two others and looked round, for the place was left in charge of a caretaker for the afternoon. But what I specially looked for, there wasn't a sign of : no trap-door nor hole in the ceiling through which the light could have shone down. Indeed, directly I heard of her death, I didn't expect it.

Father asked a few questions, especially what the old lady was found in. "No, she hadn't undressed," I heard the caretaker saying ; "she had her cap on as usual, and her little plaid shawl about her shoulders."—That was just what I expected, too.

That is the exact story of how I saw Mrs. Gill's Ghost. I'd heard plenty of talk about apparitions and spirits and such like, but I hadn't given them much heed until I saw this myself. I can't help believing in them now. And though I wasn't frightened at the time, I don't want to see no more of them.

G. B. STUART.



THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE STORY OF THE NECKLACE.

THERE, in their nest of faded white satin, lay the rubies, sparkling fiery red in the morning sunshine.

There were only four persons in the room who did not at once come forward to look at them. The Count and Godwin remained in their places; the veiled woman did not stir; and Caroline stayed on her couch. But Olga, breaking from her mother's hold, ran up to the table with irrepressible curiosity. Even Mr. Corder peeped at them over Jane's shoulder, and Miss Lindrick stood by Dorothy's side to get a good view. There were many exclamations of wonderment and admiration, but at last Dorothy's clear old voice was heard above them all.

"The stones look even brighter than they did," she said. "But where is the pendant? There used to be a sort of Maltese cross. It has been taken away."

Mr. Burnett again stepped forward, and laid a second open case upon the table. This time there was a general cry of astonishment. Olga laid hands upon the contents of the second case in great excitement.

"This is our lost necklace!" she said, joyously. "Mamma, do come and see! Here it is, pendant and all. Not a stone is missing. I have had it on my neck a dozen times, and I should know it anywhere."

"Come, Caroline, and identify your property," called Canon Earle, raising his voice and looking towards the couch in the corner.

The Countess rose, slowly and unwillingly, and dragged herself up to the group at the table. She looked at the second necklace with eyes that were strangely dull, and spoke in a listless tone.

"Yes; that is mine," she said briefly.

"But," began Dorothy in a puzzled voice, "I thought that this necklace, which Mr. Burnett first showed us, was Count Gliska's!"

"I see I must go on with my explanation," said the quiet jeweller, with a smile. "I left off with Count Gradizoff's visit to my shop. It was, as I have said, the necklace with the initials on the clasp that he wished to sell. As I have also said, I recognised it at once; and Count Gradizoff explained that it had come into his possession through the political difficulties of its first owner. He asked three

thousand pounds for the necklace. But I answered that, being imperfect, it was not worth that sum. Its pendant was missing. That pendant was shaped like a heart, and had a large ruby, of great value, in the middle. Without the pendant I could not give more than fifteen hundred pounds. The Count was disappointed, but he agreed to accept my offer. And so the bargain was concluded; and just before we parted he came out with rather a singular question."

Here Burnett paused, and glanced at Godwin, who made him a quick sign to go on. Caroline turned away from the table, and went slowly back to her corner.

"He asked whether it would be a very difficult and costly task to make an imitation of the necklace. I told him that there was no need for that. I had a necklace in my possession, in garnets, evidently made from the Gliska design. A jeweller, of course, would detect the imposture at once; but anyone else—a lady, for instance—would not be so quick-sighted. The most striking difference was in the pendants; but the Gliska pendant had disappeared. He bought the garnet necklece, and went away with it. About a year later I chanced to hear of his death; and there, I thought, the story had ended."

A second time the speaker paused. And this time it was Gliska who signed to him to go on.

"Some months after the Russian Count's death," he continued, "a lady, in widow's weeds, entered my shop, and announced herself as the Countess Gradizoff. She had come to dispose of the Gliska necklace, valued at three thousand pounds! I need not say that the necklace she produced was that which she has already identified as her property. Nor need I dwell on her disappointment when I explained that her late husband had deceived her. She departed, and I never saw her again until I met her in this room to-day."

Caroline remained motionless on her couch, shielding her face with one hand. The others were still grouped round the table.

"Another year went by," said the jeweller, "and then I had a visit from Count Gliska himself, then known as Mr. Vordenberg. His object was to dispose of some of the jewels that still remained to him, and devote the proceeds to the relief of his distressed countrymen. Naturally enough, I showed him the necklace, explaining how it had come into my hands. And it is at his desire that I am here to tell my story to-day."

Burnett had told his tale, simply and straightforwardly; and at its close he stepped back quietly into the shade. There was a moment's pause; and then the strange lady came forward, now without her veil.

Olga stared at her in amazement; Dorothy and Jane looked at her with some vague remembrance of her face. But her old pupil was the first to recognise her and give her a name.

"You are Paulina Lorenski; but you are very much changed,

and ever so much prettier," she said, running up quickly to kiss her.

Madame Valerot turned hastily away from the young face; tears rose to her soft brown eyes, but she spoke calmly.

"I must not kiss you, Olga; I am a very wicked woman. I have come here to-day to confess my sin, and make such atonement as I can for all the wrong I have done. It was I who stole the necklace from Mr. Earle's box, believing it to be a thing of great value. One evening, while he was sitting in yonder room with Miss Lindrick, I drugged his coffee. Do you remember," she added, appealing suddenly and sharply to Alma, "how careful I was to give him the cup that had no cream in it?"

"I do remember," Alma answered, with a flush. Her eyes met Godwin's eyes as she spoke, and he smiled kindly. Kindly, that was all.

"He slept soundly that night. His door was unlocked; I entered his room unheard, hunted up his keys, and stole the necklace. Afterwards I found that I had committed a useless crime. The late Count Gradizoff had never given Count Gliska's rubies to his wife. The thing that I stole I have come to restore. It only remains for me to beg that the Countess will pardon me, as her nephew has already done."

"Oh, I dare say mamma will forgive you," said Olga, breaking an awkward silence. "As the rubies were not real, you didn't do anything so very bad after all. I can't imagine what papa could have been thinking of when he sold the true necklace! Of course it was very wicked of you not to speak sooner, Paulina. It is your fault that we have all been so dreadfully unkind to poor Cousin Godwin."

The girl's frank and simple speech had the effect of loosening other tongues. Canon Earle was the first to turn to Godwin with a few candid words of affectionate regret. Dorothy and Jane followed, the latter weeping. Then came the Colonel and old Redburn, who was less surly than he had intended to be. Alma stole up to her old lover with a handkerchief in her hand, and genuine tears in her pale blue eyes.

"You can never forgive me, I know," she whispered.

"Indeed, I can," he answered, rather cruelly. "It was all for the best." Suddenly Dorothy, still a little bewildered, looked around in search of Caroline. But the Countess had made her escape through the back drawing-room, and was safe upstairs in her own room.

Good-byes followed. Miss Earle entreated Godwin and his friends to stay to luncheon. Mr. Corder, however, had already ordered luncheon at the Railway Hotel; and so they all departed, carrying the Canon off with them. But before he went he found time to whisper a few words in Dorothy's ear.

"It is Caroline who is the real culprit," he said. "She has coolly defrauded us of three thousand pounds."

The house seemed strangely silent after they were all gone. By mutual consent the two sisters went out into the old garden for fresh air and repose.

They walked slowly down one of the long paths, where thick boughs met and embraced over their heads, and bees were humming and butterflies fluttering all round them. They knew the path well. It was here that they had run races when they were merry little girls. It was here that they had sauntered, arm-in-arm, to confide to each other those shadowy love affairs which had never taken shape and substance. And it was here that they had watched Godwin, a very small boy with a tiny barrow, going cheerfully along to his own garden at the bottom of the grounds.

It is a true saying that—

"In the garden grows
More than the gardener sows."

Memories spring up there, thick as pansies. Sorrows grow among the roses and lilies. Hopes go climbing among the honeysuckles, shooting out tendrils on all sides, and withering, often enough, before the summer is half over. As the prim old sisters walked along that favourite path, they were both conscious that their thoughts had gone straying back into the past.

"What are we going to do about Caroline?" Dorothy asked at last. "How shall we go on living with her year after year? Do you think that we can ever forget this mean deception that she has practised upon us? Even now I can hardly believe that she knew what she did!"

"I am afraid she did know," said Jane, slowly and sadly.

"Yes, yes; of course she did. But it was so base, so sordid. What a handsome girl she used to be! and how proud we were of her when she married Count Gradizoff! Oh, Jane, if she had wanted money, why could she not have said so plainly? Do you remember the crafty way in which she hinted that the value of the necklace should be the price of her silence? For her child's sake, she said, not for her own, the loss must be made good."

"Even the meanness is not the worst of it!" cried Jane, suddenly bursting into tears. "Think of the cruel suspicion that she fastened upon our poor boy! I believe she knew from the first that he was innocent. I dare say she always thought that little Lorenski had been the real thief! Oh, Dorothy, Dorothy, she can't be really an Earle; she must have got into our family somehow by mistake! Let us tell her to go away!"

"Perhaps she won't wait to be told," the elder woman said thoughtfully. "I hardly think she will want to stay here and face the Lindricks. She is paid back in her own coin indeed. Count Gliska has not spared her."

A sound of hasty steps flying along the walk startled them both.

It was Olga, who came running after them with a scared face and wide eyes.

"What does all this mean, Aunt Dorothy?" she asked, breathlessly. "Mamma is heaping all our things into boxes, and saying that we are going away. Why must we go? I am very happy here. I want to stay. And why is everything to be done in such a dreadful hurry?"

"Your mother must answer your questions, Olga," said Dorothy, with a heavy sigh.

"But she won't answer. She goes on packing in the wildest way. And her face looks very white and strange. Aunt Dorothy, if she goes, may I not stay here? I will be very good, and not give you any trouble."

"You have already given us trouble," said Dorothy, sharply. "If it had not been for you, the affair of the necklace would never have been known to the Lindricks, and we should have been spared a great deal of unnecessary disgrace. Yes, and poor Godwin would not have had to endure such insults from that violent old coffee man! No, Olga; as your mother is going, it will be best for all that you should go too."

Miss Gradizoff, bellowing out her grief in loud sobs, ran back to the house, and the sisters slowly followed. They were immensely relieved. Caroline was about to deliver them from the burden of her presence, and they would be left to end their days in peace.

Canon Earle came back after luncheon in time to be present at the Countess's leave-taking. Very few words were said. Caroline preserved a haughty demeanour to the last, and persisted steadily in posing as a deeply injured woman.

"Good-bye, Caroline," said the Canon, escorting her to the carriage with his usual high-bred courtesy. "With regard to the sum paid to you for the necklace, it will be as well just to mention that we shall be quite willing, of course, to receive it by instalments. You are going up to town *en route* for St. Petersburg? Good-bye again. God bless you."

Olga was too sulky even to look at her uncle; and her mother did not return his parting benediction.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"OLD FRIENDS, OLD SCENES."

WEDDING preparations were going on steadily in Wimpole Street. The little Wyvilles were already provided with a new governess; and their mother's mind was entirely occupied with a mysterious event—the sudden disappearance of Madame Valerot.

The widow overwhelmed Harriet with questions, but Harriet had

nothing of importance to tell. She could only say that Madame had suddenly announced that she must go, and had given no reason for this abrupt departure. All her accounts had been satisfactorily settled, and she had gone her way without taking leave of anyone. Neither letter nor message had been left for Mrs. Wyville; she had not even said a word of good-bye to Mrs. Milton, and there was not the slightest clue to her whereabouts. But Count Gliska, if he had cared to speak, might have put Mrs. Wyville on the right track to discover her missing friend.

Not so very far away from Wimpole Street the trees in a certain walled garden were beautiful with the green of summer. Under the trees there were flowers and grass; and women in serge gowns and white coiffes went quietly up and down the paths sometimes. The high walls screened the garden from the gaze of the outer world; and the great house, standing in its grounds, was carefully protected from prying eyes. Now and then the school-girls, on the other side of the road, could catch glimpses of the nuns from their upper windows. But they never saw the faces hidden under that strange head-gear, and never heard the voices of those who had sought refuge in that guarded retreat.

One of those faces, no longer blooming, still kept the charm of soft brown eyes, and a certain innocent, wistful look. But few would have recognised Madame Valerot in the pale *religieuse*, who was the most silent woman in that abode of silence. Peace had come to her with penitence; she had ceased to desire the things that she had given up for ever. This still life, which had seemed so terrible to her in her restless youth, was all that she wanted now. The school-girls, always given to making up romantic stories about the nuns, little knew that the eventful history of one of them was stranger than any of their dreams. Paulina Lorenski and gay Madame Valerot—these women had had their day; and pale Sister Mary, going through her daily duties and austerities, sometimes wondered whether she had ever known them. She did not suffer her mind to dwell upon the bygone days, but set her thoughts to the tune of the chapel bell, and was content with her lot.

These summer hours, that went by for some in a monotonous calm, were too short for Harriet and Beatrice.

There was so much to be done, and everybody was so slow in doing it—that was what Harriet was always saying. The work-people, engaged to set the Kensington villa in order, seemed to go crawling through their tasks; and Beatrice and Godwin changed their minds so often about the furniture that Harriet lost patience with them both. They developed peculiar artistic tastes which drove her to distraction; and they haunted old curiosity shops until Mrs. Milton hated the sight of china monsters and queer cups and saucers.

But, in the eyes of Mr. Corder, everything that they did was wise

and right. He would listen with deep interest to Godwin's long histories of Wedgwood bowls and ancient teapots, and he spent hours in studying rich stuffs of quaint pattern, which were to be converted into draperies and curtains. These young people, with their fantastic ideas, never wearied him for a moment. Here were two lives to be made happy, and it was his part to surround them with all the things they craved for.

The Kensington house was large, and two rooms could very well be spared to an old man who wanted to feel the sunshine that the young shed around them. Moreover, the pair could not endure the thought of his solitary life any longer. They had both learnt to call him father, and consulted him about all that they did or thought of doing. In their life he had begun to live anew. A little while ago he had been thinking only of the end of his pilgrimage; now he found it in his heart to desire a long sojourn on this side of the mystic river.

At this time Godwin paid a second visit to Fairbridge, and slept one night in his old room at Meadow House.

Dorothy and Jane were supremely happy in his company. And with their own delicate old hands they packed up certain treasures that had belonged to his grandfather, and insisted that he should carry them back to his new home.

"We cannot do all that we want to do for you, dear boy," said Dorothy regretfully. "You know how shamefully Caroline has defrauded us. It is a hard word to use; and we feel that we would rather not talk much about her doings. But your uncle—well, your uncle likes money, and he can't forgive her."

"I am in no need of money, Aunt Dorothy," said Godwin, kissing the old woman's waxen cheek. "We shall be quite contented, Beatrice and I, if you will let us come to see you sometimes."

"Let you come!" Dorothy spoke with unwonted animation. "Why, we shall love to have you here. Once upon a time I thought that I could never take kindly to any niece but Alma. But Beatrice won our hearts before we knew anything about your attachment."

"And how indignant she was because we had been misled!" cried Jane, with tearful eyes. "Some day I will tell you how she talked to me on the bridge, and confessed her love for you. But I can't speak of these things at present; they are sure to make me cry."

"There really is nothing to cry about, Jane," said Dorothy reprovingly. "When *will* you try to overcome your emotional impulses? No one is too old to improve; and if—if in time to come—we should be deeply interested in the management of certain young olive branches, it will be necessary to set them an example of perfect self-control."

"You will both set them examples of perfect breeding and goodness," declared Godwin; and Jane kissed him to hide her pretty old blushes. She wondered how Dorothy could have said such a thing.

The mention of the old bridge had reminded Godwin that it was

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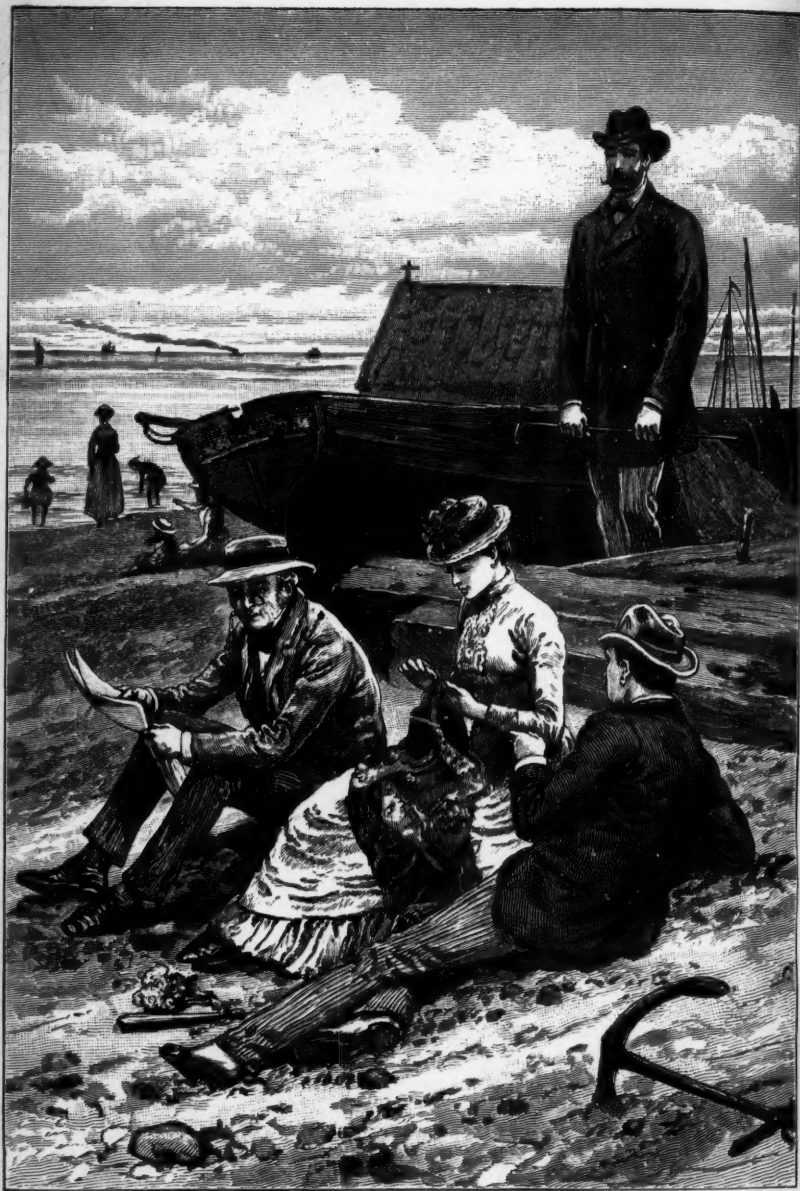
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FRANK DADD.

R. TAYLOR

SOME ONE WALKING ALONG THE BEACH AT THAT MOMENT, HEARD THE LAUGHTER
AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE HAPPY GROUP.

his favourite haunt in boyhood ; and he already knew that Beatrice had loved the spot for his sake. He had decided not to leave Fairbridge till afternoon ; and there was time to walk to the bridge before luncheon.

There were few changes in the place ; the moss cushions seemed to have thickened on the grey stone work, but the song of the stream was as sweet and glad as it had ever been. He stood still, leaning his arms on the parapet and gazing down into the rushing tide.

That bright, swift flow of water had all its old fascination for the gazer. He remembered the last time that he had ever stood here, and thought that all the joys of life were swept from him like the fallen leaves that the current carried away. And now it seemed that they were not joys, but sorrows that the stream was sweeping out of sight. Doubts, perplexities, anxieties—all were taken out of his heart, and borne off to some unknown sea which would never give them back. Heaven was kind ; love had clasped him by the hand, and all the world was fair and new.

While he mused, watching the drifting leaves and ever-shifting lights and shadows, a light step was drawing near to his side. And presently a well-remembered voice, a little tremulous, pronounced his name.

"Alma !" he said, turning round and confronting her. "I didn't expect to meet you in this lonely old place. I came here to get a glimpse of one of my old haunts before I go back to town."

"Then you are going back to-day, Godwin ? You don't stay long."

He looked down at Alma and wondered at the change that had come over her aspect. Everybody and everything else in the old home had seemed wonderfully unaltered ; Miss Lindrick alone was showing plain signs of a premature decay. It was not that she looked as if she were going to die—it was likely that she might live as long as (perhaps even longer than) other people ; but it would always be a dry, flowerless life, hardly worth living at all.

It is a strange fact that many women who have lived a troubled life and suffered deeply retain much of the freshness of youth, while their more prosperous sisters fade early. There are those who fail, and yet no less—

"Bear up beneath their unsuccess,"

and even, in some fashion, rise above their shattered hopes and vainly-lavished loves. These are the women who grow young at the sound of a child's laugh ; who are made glad by such a common thing as a rose or a sunbeam ; who wear what Browning calls a "glory-garland round the soul." They may have worn faces and sad eyes ; but who has not noticed that indescribable youthfulness which comes into such faces and suddenly transforms them ?

Alma Lindrick had passed from childhood to girlhood and from girlhood to womanhood without once experiencing any intense suffer-

ing. She had, perhaps, loved Godwin Earle better than anyone else in the world; he was a part of the morning of her life; and yet she had resolutely banished him from that life, and lived on tranquilly enough without him. But, tranquil as she had been, she had begun to show the marks of advancing age. An existence steadily devoted to self-interest is a tame affair at the best, and weariness is a greater foe to woman's beauty than sorrow. It was a pinched and withered Alma who stood confronting Godwin in the sunshine, and looking up at him with an unusual wistfulness in her glance.

How strange it seems to stand face to face with an old love after the spell is broken! It is an experience that comes to most of us in the course of our lives, the world being such a small place that we cannot hope to escape altogether from each other. Suddenly, at some unexpected corner, the man encounters his old goddess, shorn now of all vestige of divinity, and finds himself marvelling at the by-gone infatuation. Can this be the very idol at whose shrine he offered up his best gifts? How is the fine gold become dim? The old charm that lurked in every look and tone and gesture, whither has it fled? And the woman who, after long years, meets again the hero of her early dreams, is astonished at her own indifference. There is a curious consciousness of having outlived her affections, and a strange lack of sympathy with her former self. Is this indeed the being who claimed all her thoughts and hopes and prayers? The parting with him had been as the rending of limb from limb, an anguish that had left her spent and crushed for many a day. And now she can greet him calmly, and go her way without even a quickening of the pulse or a passing sigh.

The death of feeling is a merciful thing. If our feelings never perished, our lives would surely be a prolonged agony; we should embrace dead branches with the living fibres of the heart. Some thoughts of this kind were in Godwin's mind when he stood and looked at his old sweetheart.

"No," he answered, "I don't stay long; I am wanted in town. You know I am a business man nowadays, and can't afford to take many holidays."

"I can never fancy you associating yourself with business," she said, resting one thin little hand on the edge of the parapet. "I always think of you as you used to be in the old days."

"Waiting for something to turn up?" he smiled. "I assure you I was very uncomfortable in my state of patrician laziness."

Uncomfortable in the time when she was his constant companion! Had he forgotten their daily meetings in the shrubbery that divided the grounds of Meadow House from Oak Lodge? And those moonlight strolls in the old chestnut avenue? It is always hard for a woman to realise that a man possesses an unlimited power of forgetting. Through his life there verily flows that river of Lethe whose waters she has often sighed for in vain.

"Happy people never look back, I suppose," she said, stifling little sigh. "Everything is going well with you now, is it not?"

"Yes; and with you too, I hope."

"One can't be very cheerful when someone is lying dangerously ill in the house. You have heard that Mr. Redburn is dying?"

"No," said Godwin gravely. "I am sorry to hear it. And your home must be sad, of course. I'm afraid all this gloom is very bad for you."

"I am depressed," she admitted; "and I came here just because I thought I should meet nobody. One grows tired of endless inquiries and condolences. People seem to fancy that because he is dying in our house he will leave us all his money. It is too absurd!"

"I hope he will." Godwin spoke earnestly. "He is a lonely man, and no one will be defrauded if he does."

"Not even Miss Ward?" asked Alma, with a quick glance. "She has the first claim. He promised to make her his heiress."

"She absolves him from that promise. I shall have enough, now, for her and myself. We don't want anything from Mr. Redburn."

While he was speaking, Alma could scarcely recognise the Godwin of old days. Earle had straightened himself haughtily, and was looking down upon her with stern eyes.

"Well, he may rally," she said, glancing away from the face that had no tender expression for her now. "I was always sorry for all that he made you and Miss Ward suffer; but we could not control him."

"Thank you for being sorry, Alma, but the suffering is over. The aunts will scold me if I keep luncheon waiting; so good-bye."

"Good-bye." She gave him her hand without meeting his eyes again, and, lifting his hat, he turned away from the bridge.

For a little while Alma remained standing on the spot that he had just left, and looked down (as he had done) into the hurrying tide. The same accompaniment may do duty for many songs, and the thoughts that Alma set to the water-music were very unlike Godwin's happy musings. She had ceased to expect much joy from life, although she was almost sure of wealth. Her father had no doubt about Mr. Redburn's will; the future lay before her like a wide expanse of green pastures and still waters, but it was a monotonous outlook. She did not want it changed; she told herself that she was perfectly satisfied, and yet this brief interview with her old lover had revived the dream of her youth.

Miss Lindrick was not, as we know, a romantic woman; but as she, too, turned away from the bridge, certain half-forgotten fragments of poetry came drifting into her mind. The country was bathed in the still sunshine of ripe summer: the foliage of the woods

was dark and full : all the shadows were deep, and all the lights clear and strong. It was a day that filled the heart with thoughts of old summers, of bygone rambles under as blue a sky, of honeysuckle gathered by hands that will never offer us a flower again. To most of us, let us be ever so prosaic, there comes, on these rich warm days, a perfume from the past.

Alma let herself into the grounds of Oak Lodge by a side entrance, and then sat down, half wearily, on a seat under one of the trees. From this spot she could overlook the long paths winding through the red rose bushes and see the ivy-grown gables of Meadow House ; and there came into her head two lines of Owen Meredith which Godwin had repeated long ago :

"There's not a flower, there's not a tree, in this old garden where we sit,
But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded up in it."

Well, it was evident that he had done with memories. Next summer she should see him sauntering along the terrace of his old home, his arm round his wife's waist, his face wearing a look of settled content. She almost determined, then and there, to persuade the Colonel to let Oak Lodge and go abroad.

"Alma," said her father's voice, suddenly breaking in upon her reverie. "Alma, where are you?"

"Here," she answered, springing up from her seat. "I only came out for half an hour to get a little fresh air. Has anything happened?"

"Something *has* happened, indeed!" The Colonel stood before her, paler and graver than she had ever seen him. "He is dead; he died a few minutes ago in my arms. And he told me, just at the last, that he had left everything to you."

Alma sank down again on the seat under the tree, and pressed her hand upon her heart. Neither father nor daughter had felt much love for the old man who was gone; but now that he had left them he had become, for a moment, almost dear. His last words had proved his affection for a woman who had given him nothing beyond dutiful attentions. Alma was smitten with a sudden sense of regret, and a sort of self-contempt for her own shallowness of heart.

But she rallied quickly, and got up again, looking pale but calm. Then she put her hand within her father's arm, and began to lead him slowly down one of the long paths.

"You must take care of your health, papa," she said. "All shocks are very bad; I think you had better have a little of the doctor's advice. As soon as everything is settled we will get away from Fairbridge. Poor dear Mr. Redburn! I did not think the end was so near."

Already she had begun to feel the importance of her new position, and was assuming a little protecting air towards the Colonel. He did

not resent her manner in the least. In the future he could see himself a submissive old man, following his daughter's lead for the rest of his life, and jogging along, comfortably enough, to his final goal.

It is a mistake to suppose that people never realise their heart's desire—that the thing you most long for is the very thing that you are certain not to have. Alma was now a real heiress; she was mistress of such a fortune as she had always sighed to possess. Nor had the good luck come when it was too late in life to enjoy it; although old for her years, Miss Lindrick was still young. And yet—and yet, as she moved slowly along the path, she could not help wondering how all this prosperity would have looked if Godwin had been her lover still!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PENDANT.

THE quiet wedding was over, and the little party were all gathered in the Miltons' sitting-room, where Beatrice was standing, the centre of the admiring group. She had dispensed with bridesmaids; Godwin had received his bride from Mr. Milton's hands, and Harriet and Mr. Corder had looked on. This young couple, abundantly satisfied with each other, had wanted no bridal pomp, and Beatrice was quite content to be admired by her own people and no one else.

They were still grouped round her, saying a hundred foolish and loving things, all talking together in low tones, while she, with eyes shining through tears, clasped first one hand and then another, and then turned back to her husband with the sweet shy look that he knew and loved so well. The room was gay with flowers that made a background of bright colours for the white figure of the bride. And Count Gliska, as he softly opened the door, received an impression of bloom and light and sweetness which he never forgot.

Just for a second or two he stood in the doorway, and then Beatrice saw him, and moved towards him with a little cry of welcome. Godwin followed, and together they gently drew him in and made him one of them.

"I was afraid I should not see you before I went away," said Beatrice, with her hand still resting on his arm. "And oh, Count, we are feeling to-day, more than ever, that you have cleared our path and led us straight to happiness! Don't think us ungrateful because we haven't said very much. You know that our hearts are full."

"I shall never think anything that is not kind," Gliska answered, letting his eyes dwell for a moment on her sweet face. "And the truth is that I am your debtor. Your hand first unlocked the cell in which I had shut myself up with my fancies and memories; you let in the sunshine of the outer world, and revived my interest in the life of to-day. The poor recluse thanks you, Beatrice. It would be well if every morbid soul could have as sweet a visitant. I have

learnt that it is better even to bear new sorrows than to brood perpetually over the old."

"I, too, have learnt that lesson," said old Corder in his quiet voice. "I do not believe that the 'herb called heart's-ease' grows in solitary places. It is found in the beaten paths, trodden daily by weary feet; it is gathered by the wayside where the Samaritan finds his wounded brother."

So spoke the old merchant, and everyone knew that the words came straight from his heart. Godwin, remembering a certain long story once told in the twilight, glanced at him with a look that could be well understood.

There was a brief pause, broken by Gliska, who turned again to the bride with a smile.

"I have kept my wedding gift till the wedding was over," he said, drawing a small morocco case from his breast. "But before you see it, Beatrice, I must once more recall your mind to the story of the necklace. You have not forgotten that the pendant of the true necklace was missing?"

"No, I have not forgotten," she replied.

"In my youth," he continued, speaking in a voice so calm and sweet that it fell like music on the ear—"in my youth I did not care to see my love bedecked with jewels. I had plenty to give her; but she was a girl, and gems do not become early girlhood. The ruby necklace had been worn by my mother and grandmother; but it seemed too splendid a thing for Sofie's slender throat. But the heart which formed the pendant, *that* she could wear; it was a fitting gift from her lover—a type of that heart, red with life-blood, which throbbed for her alone."

Again there was a momentary pause; no one moved; Beatrice had grown pale, and stood listening with dilated eyes fixed upon the speaker.

"I left her at my house in Warsaw," he went on, "and started on a short journey, taking the pendant with me. A friend of mine, living at some distance, had told me that he wished to dispose of an antique gold chain, and give the proceeds to our distressed countrymen. I went to his house, bought the chain, to which I affixed the heart, and then set out on my return. You know the end of the tale—you know that I was met on the way home, and told of all that had been done in my absence."

There was a deep murmur from his hearers. The bride drew nearer, and her blue eyes mutely entreated him to spare himself. But he met the wistful glance with perfect calmness.

"In all my many trials, in all the wanderings of my exile, I have kept this jewel hidden in my breast. No poverty could induce me to part with it; for years I have treasured it as the last link between me and the dead. But now—now, Beatrice, I would fain feel that it is a link between the living and me; the dead are waiting for me in

heaven; and you, my living friend and sister, will cheer me while I have to stay on earth. Heart of gold, your worth is far above rubies!"

He took out of the case a short chain of ancient make, from which was suspended the ruby heart of the Gliska necklace. As the light touched it the jewel glowed like wine; its solemn splendour drew all eyes upon it; and Beatrice, still pale, received it with a trembling hand.

What had she done to deserve of God a brighter lot than hers for whom this gift was destined first? As she looked deep into the rich hues of the precious thing, she thought of those old legends which told that gems were sometimes the abode of spirits, and by their aid the future was revealed to the gazer. Was not a deep-tinted stone like this the sardius of the high priest's breastplate? What if there were indeed some mystic power lurking in this ancient jewel, fashioned by hands that had long ceased to labour? A sudden sunbeam, striking on the great ruby, kindled it to wonderful glory, like—

"The central fire at the sphere's heart bound."

And the blue eyes, gazing into its depths, turned timidly away, and sought the face they loved best to rest upon.

"It is well," said Gliska gently. "I could not have given the jewel to any woman who would value it less for its worth's sake. For such baubles some have sacrificed love, honour, religion—all that is dearest in this world and the next. You need not fear to wear my ruby, Beatrice. If any spirits are housed therein, they are spirits of light and truth; they can show you nothing but love here, and bliss hereafter."

"She has no fears," said Godwin, taking the chain and clasping it round her neck with his own hands. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; and the ruby heart shall rest above the heart of gold."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HAPPY DAYS.

THE winter passed happily enough to the young couple and the old man in the Kensington villa.

Summer came again, and in June Godwin took his wife to Fairbridge, and the aunts received her with open arms. In the sweet evenings, when the perfumes from the garden were mingled with the scent of the hay-fields, the pair (lovers still) sauntered together along the terrace, just as Alma had seen them in fancy. But there was no one to watch their bliss with envious eyes. Oak Lodge was tenanted by strangers; the Lindricks were abroad, and it was doubtful whether they would ever revisit their old home.

"I think Alma must have felt her wealth to be quite a burden," said Jane Earle one day. "She looked years older after the money came to her. All at once she seemed to become a withered woman—like one of my roses nipped by the east wind! And there was something proud and peevish in her manner."

"She was very unlike the Alma that we used to know," remarked Dorothy.

"The Alma Godwin used to be so much in love with," said Jane, with her mind fixed on the past.

"Oh, that was a long, long time ago, Jane," cried the elder sister in a reproving tone. "And we all know that second thoughts are best, and so is second love."

The husband and wife laughed outright. Aunt Dorothy's fear of hurting somebody's feelings was amusing.

"Dear aunty," said Beatrice tenderly, "I wish everyone was as considerate as you are. But it doesn't distress me to feel that I was not the first tenant of Godwin's heart. I have only had one love myself, but I am not jealous of the past. To be loved perfectly and entirely in the present, that is all that a woman wants."

"Then you have got all you want, my dear; I am sure of that," replied Dorothy, stroking the girl's soft cheek.

They were sitting in the drawing-room, waiting for the summons to dinner. The glass doors were open, that the soft air might bring the breath of flowers into the quiet old room. Beatrice was wearing a pale blue gown, and had a bunch of Jane's Gloire de Dijon roses in her bodice. Round her throat was the antique gold chain, and the evening light struck brightly on the ruby heart.

"Look," said Godwin, calling the old ladies' notice to the jewel. "This heart was Count Gliska's wedding gift. Gradizoff got possession of the necklace, but the pendant was safe in Gliska's keeping. I don't think Aunt Caroline Gradizoff would be able to endure the sight of my wife's keepsake!"

The sisters examined the heart with great interest and delight. And then their thoughts turned, naturally enough, to the absent Countess, whose sojourn in Meadow House had brought such discomfort to them all.

"We have had one or two short letters from Caroline," said Dorothy, with a sigh. "She says she is very sorry that she cannot pay back any of our money at present. Jane and I take it patiently; but your uncle, Godwin, is by no means a patient man where money is concerned: and lately he has heard strange tales of Caroline."

"What tales?" Godwin asked.

"Well, he is told that she has been seen playing at Monaco. We hope it is not true; it seems dreadful to think that an Earle could ever be a gambler. And we used to be so proud of Caroline when she was young; she was very handsome."

"Never half as good-looking as you and Aunt Jane and poor Aunt Grace," declared Godwin warmly. "You always made too much of her, dear aunty, and let her ride rough-shod over everybody. Anyway, whether she pays you or not, it is a good thing to have got rid of her."

"Poor Grace," whispered Jane, wiping away a tear. "If it had not been for Caroline——"

"Bygones must be bygones," interposed Dorothy quickly. "I will say, my dear boy, that I was surprised to find Mr. Corder so presentable. He is really quite a gentlemanly old man. We should be glad to see him here again."

"I don't think he will come again to Fairbridge," Godwin said in a quiet voice. "The place has a great many painful associations. But I will tell him that you are prepared to give him a welcome. You know that he is a father to Beatrice and myself."

"We know it," Dorothy answered; "and we wish that we had done him justice sooner. You must forgive two lonely old women for all their many mistakes."

Beatrice and her husband did not long leave Mr. Corder alone at Kensington. They persuaded him to come with them to a quiet watering-place on the south coast, where they might listen to the song of the waves in peace.

It was a place little patronised by tourists, for Southsea, with its military splendours, and its endless attractions of bands, beauties, and all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, was not far off. But Godwin had seen quite enough of pomps and vanities; Mr. Corder had never cared a straw about them; and Beatrice was too happy to want to be amused. It was sufficient for her that Godwin noticed every detail of her pretty summer costumes, and gave his gravest attention to the arrangement of ribbons and laces. Nor was Mr. Corder one whit behind his adopted son in the matter of taste; and Mrs. Godwin was wont to declare laughingly that she lived in an atmosphere of criticism.

"It only needs the Count to complete the trio," she said one afternoon when they were all sitting on the beach. "You three men are always interfering with me in the most arbitrary way. As to the Count, I know by his eyes, before he speaks, whether he approves of a bonnet or a gown. Never was a woman so fettered by men's opinions as I am!"

"I shudder to think what you would be without us," said Godwin, propping himself on his elbow and regarding her gravely. "If you were left to yourself you would break out into gorgeous colours, such as 'make the rash gazer wipe his eye!' You have a sneaking love for vivid red, and if I hadn't wrestled with you at Marshall and Snelgrove's you would have been sitting under a flamingo sunshade at this moment."

"It had such a charming handle," murmured Beatrice regretfully.

The two men laughed ; and someone, walking along the beach at that moment, heard the laughter and caught sight of the happy group. How perfectly those three understood each other ! These three lives—how blissfully they mingled, and flowed on in one stream of content ! He felt just then the loneliness of his own life as he had not felt it for some time. Why was it that he was always doomed to look on and see others enjoying the very blessings that he had craved ?

This was not a very heroic mood, but the best and noblest souls are often the prey of Giant Despair. In the next instant Beatrice looked up and met his fixed, dreamy gaze.

She answered that gaze with a bright smile and hands outstretched in welcome. Ah ! he might read her heart, for it was full of gratitude for her friend's true fidelity and kindness. She loved him, and would always love him, with that pure sisterly love which confers a dignity on him upon whom it is bestowed. And he might openly accept this affection without doing wrong to any human being.

After all, there are royal consolations for those who have stood the test of the "cleansing fires." The baser part of their love has been burned away, and it is the baser part of love which causes the worst suffering. You have no claim to be called a true lover, says one poet :

" Unless you can love as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you."

And although he had his rare moments of repining, Count Gliska had truly learnt the highest way of loving.

"I have been speaking of you," Beatrice cried. "How good it is to see you here !"

"Very good," said Godwin heartily ; and Mr. Corder added his word of welcome.

Their warmth thawed the ice that had been gathering round Gliska's heart. A minute ago he had felt himself lonely, unloved, forgotten ; now he sat down on the shingle with the little group, and knew that they were one with him in spirit.

The sea, deep blue under the cloudless sky of August, lay asleep in the afternoon sun. Here and there gleamed a white sail ; now and then the silvery wings of a gull flashed across the sapphire waste. They were sitting on the shady side of a boat-house, and Beatrice had gathered a great variety of small possessions around her. The young matron was far more luxurious than the girl had been, and her husband and adopted father were always buying her presents and doing their utmost to spoil her. There was a long strip of satin, on which she was embroidering gorgeous silken flowers ; and there was the most dainty work-case that ever was seen, fitted up with golden implements that might have belonged to Miss Kilmansegg. Added to these there were a costly shawl, a fan, a cut-glass bottle of Cologne

water with a golden top, and a bunch of freshly-gathered roses. With these belongings conveniently strewed about on the shingle, it was very easy for a well-disposed young woman to get through a long summer morning.

Gliska smiled as he noted all her little luxuries. He was looking at her, and thinking what a beautiful face she had, and how sweet an expression it wore in repose. Life had been kind to her; the desires of her heart were granted; for her there were no wasting years of patient loneliness. And yet there were multitudes of women, as good and fair as she was, who were destined to endure that slow decay which has been well called "the lingering asphyxia of soul." Even in this quiet watering-place could be found scores of girls who had never walked on the sunny side of life. A few yards off, sitting on the beach, and looking out with weary eyes across the calm sea, there was a woman, still young and still comely, who was tired of asking herself Mr. Mallock's sad question. The answer that her heart gave her was always—no.

"You have not yet told us what brought you hither," said Beatrice, taking advantage of a pause in the men's talk. "Why did you not write and say you were coming, Count? Then you would have given us the pleasure of expectation."

"You have pleasures enough," he answered, smiling. "When the cup is full, what matters one little drop more?"

"How unkind you are!" she cried, with eyes full of reproach. "You are trying to assume airs of unimportance. A little swagger would please us a great deal better; we don't believe in your utter unconsciousness of your own value."

Those few half-jesting, half-earnest words restored Gliska's faith in himself and in the love of his friends. They were spoken with that indescribable charm of playfulness which is only possessed by women who have seen much of the world, or by the favoured few who are gifted naturally with perfect tact. Half the women who utter such words are unaware of the full influence of their graceful little speeches; they make them because it is their business in life to be pleasant to men. But Beatrice was prompted by the instinct of affection, and it gladdened her to see Gliska's brightening face.

"You have not answered my question," she went on. "No mysteries, please! As Harriet would say, 'I can't abide them.'"

"I will answer you willingly enough, Beatrice," said Gliska, with one of his gentle looks. "We have done with mysteries in our lives. Well, I am on my way to Portsmouth, and my errand there is soon told."

"I did not know you had any friends in Portsmouth," she said, with awakening interest.

"I have not. But in an old cemetery near the town there is a grave that I wish to see. It is my father's grave."

Beatrice gave her husband a quick glance, and laid her hand on his arm.

"Count," she said earnestly, "you will let us go with you, will you not? You must not be left alone any more with the past. If you are going to tread old paths, let your friends walk by your side."

He looked at her, smiled gravely, and shook his head.

"No, no, Beatrice; I cannot take you and Godwin to such a dismal place. Enjoy your summer holidays, my child, and store up pleasant memories for the winter."

"Do you think I am only fit to live in the sun?" she asked. "A friend is but half a friend if you cannot invite him to walk with you in the shade."

"I believe you will have to yield to her, Gliska," said Godwin. "She has set her mind upon this thing. When do you intend to go to Portsmouth?"

"This evening," replied the Count. But he was hardly allowed to finish his brief sentence; Mr. Corder, Godwin and Beatrice joined in an outburst of expostulation. Why had he come to look at them if he meant to run away at once? What had they done to deserve so little of his society?

"You shall stay here all night, and we will go to Portsmouth with you to-morrow," said Mrs. Earle, with a pretty imperiousness that cloaked a deeper feeling. "You shall wait and see the sunset on the waters, and then we will sing old songs in the dusk. Let us have a really romantic evening for once—just such an evening as a poet would have immortalised."

And Gliska yielded, as Godwin had foreseen; and Beatrice, happy in getting her own way, went off to their hotel, impatient for afternoon tea.

The three men followed her lazily, across the shingle, and up the terrace steps to the gaudy building known as the "Grand," and made as brilliant as possible with touches of red and blue. Strong colouring, and plenty of white lace curtains, gave the "Grand" the look of a first-class doll's house; and it was so evidently a summer abode that one almost suspected it of being run up afresh, by an enterprising builder, every spring. Nobody could picture it standing here all the winter, to face the bitter north-easter, and the driving rain or snow.

Inside, it was more comfortable than its pretentiousness would have led one to suppose. The Earles' sitting-room looked delightfully fresh and cool; there were flowers on all the tables; the light was subdued; and books and easy chairs abounded. One of the best of these seats stood in a flowery corner between the piano and a window, and here it was that Beatrice installed Count Gliska.

"I don't sing as well as I used to do," she said, in her simple, frank way. "Why is it, I wonder? I think it must be, Count, because you are not near to inspire me. Godwin says I have lost all pathos."

"Is not that the natural consequence of being perfectly contented?"

Gliska asked. "There is a certain kind of yearning which finds its genuine expression in pathetic music."

"Godwin said something of the same kind," Beatrice answered. "And he said, too, that I should never have made a good actress. I never can forget myself, and my own individual joys, and become somebody else, whose life is a tragedy."

"Thank God you have little to do with tragedies in your life," said Gliska softly.

His eyes followed her with grave satisfaction as she moved across the room to the tea-table. The roses that she wore seemed to be a part of herself, and to live longer with her than with anyone else. Her husband had gathered the flowers, and fastened them upon her gown with his own hand; and as Gliska looked at them he thought of the chrysanthemums that she had worn on a bygone winter day.

Later on, when the sun was setting over the sea, the Count played some of her old favourite melodies, and sang old songs as the light faded. His voice had lost none of its power and sweetness, and to his listeners it seemed that every note was—

"Full of hope and yet of heart-break,
Full of all the tender pathos
Of the here and the hereafter."

When he ceased, they sat near the open window, and watched the liquid gold on the sea fade slowly into grey. Then they talked of many things—of Madame Valerot in her convent; of those who had no longer a fatherland or a home; and of all the strange chances and changes that bring people together, even from the ends of the earth, and make them work out each other's destinies.

And, somehow, the three who sat and talked with Gliska that summer night felt his influence lingering with them when they went to rest. His noble patience, his calm endurance of wrongs and sorrows, greater than most men have had to bear, impressed them more deeply than ever.

"In the present day," said Mr. Corder to his children, "when men are always bawling about their grievances, it does me good to meet that man. There are certain injuries which will never be redressed in this world; losses which no expenditure of public money will ever make good; great acts of wickedness and injustice, for which all the Governments on earth can never offer compensation. But it is only here and there that we meet with a man who has suffered such wrongs as these; and it is precisely these mighty sufferers who possess their souls in strength and silence."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

ONE of our living novelists has described the Portsmouth of thirty years ago ; and everyone who has read " *By Celia's Arbour* " will remember the indescribable charm that seems to linger about the old seaport town of the story. But even Mr. Besant's magical pen could scarcely invest the Portsmouth of to-day with the romantic quaintness which belonged entirely to its past. Great improvements are the enemies of the picturesque ; and Beatrice (who knew all about Celia and her lovers) was disappointed that she could not find the old tree-shaded wall and moats, although she had been told that they were swept away.

" It was in the town of those days that Count Gliska's father lived," Mr. Corder said to her in a low voice. " He lived on the tenpence a day granted by our Government to the refugees ; and he earned a little, I think, by teaching languages. Some of these men got situations in the town, and were proved to be thoroughly trustworthy and good. And there are many among the townsfolk who remember their quiet lives and kindly ways. Very few of them lived to old age, and very few ever returned to Poland."

The place to which Gliska led his friends was a cemetery situated in the northern suburb of the town. It had a dismal, pillared entrance, and on one side there was a little tomb-like lodge for the chaplain.

The long vista of the middle walk ended in a dull brick wall, above which the masts of collier brigs appeared. The monuments were chiefly of the kind that Mr. Pugin justly hated ; flaming urns, broken columns, and inverted torches were to be seen on all sides ; and the ground was little better than a wilderness, where flowers, once cultivated, mingled freely with long grass and weeds. Forget-me-nots and London-pride flourished in a wild and ragged fashion ; batchelors' buttons flaunted here and there, and wall-flowers started up between heads of white clover. It was a cosmopolitan burying-ground, where people of divers faiths were laid to rest. On the right a husband mourned, on stone, in rigid Puritan terms, for a beloved and virtuous wife (somehow all the wives were beloved and virtuous) ; and on the left an inscription implored you of your charity to pray for the souls of certain good Catholics. The cypress, untrimmed and untended, lifted its solemn plumes in the still summer air ; laburnums dropped their showers of gold ; and two or three children, strolling along the walk, had gathered a wild posy.

In silence the Count led the way along the centre path, never pausing till he came to the very end. And there under the spreading boughs of a noble plane, which made that unlovely spot a fair green bower, they found the stone they sought.

Only a plain upright stone: there were no carvings here; no sentimental rhymes; no hackneyed bits of Holy Writ. The delicate leaf-shadows and golden lights flickered over the black letters as they read the few brief words—

In Memory of
CASIMIR GLISKA,
A Polish Refugee,
Who died at Portsea, November 17, 18—,
Aged 46 years.

"Does this place sadden you?" the Count asked quietly, as he turned to the girl who stood mute by his side. "I hope not, Beatrice, for it is good to have my true friends with me here."

"I am not sad," she answered, looking up with steady eyes; "and I am glad to be anywhere with you."

"Then promise me," he went on, gently but earnestly, as if he were telling his heart's deepest wish at last—"promise that you will come here again one day when a second name is added to that stone; promise that you will bring your children here, and speak to them of the exiles that sleep below. Teach them to be tender and considerate, as you have ever been, to those who have no country and no home. Teach them to be gentle to the beaten men whose fatherland is only a memory now; and to bear in their hearts that prayer which your Church prays for all that are desolate and oppressed. Aye, and to march shoulder to shoulder with their own countrymen, and to feel always that every one—even the poorest—is a brother, not to be despised, not to be overlooked or undervalued. You will promise me this?"

"I do promise, solemnly," she replied in a low tone. There were tears on her cheeks, but her voice was calm and steadfast.

"Just a little more," he said, "and I have done. Beatrice, it is your wish, and the wish of your husband, that I should spend the rest of my life near your home. But when that life is done, will you see that they lay me here in my father's grave? I would have no longer inscription graven on the stone; I want only that my name should stand beneath his—my own true name of Casimir Gliska."

THE END.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR ! with laughter
 We utter the words in our youth.
 Before the swift years coming after
 Have taught us to sigh at their truth,
 Or shaken our first self-reliance,
 How gaily they trip o'er the tongue ;
 We set the whole world at defiance,
 What time we are headstrong and young.

Wise cautions from grandsire or pater,
 Not seldom we hold them in scorn ;
 Till we learn with a groan or two later
 The wit of experience born ;
 By juvenile ardour impassioned,
 Such wisdom we're apt to decry,
 And dubbing their notions old fashioned,
 Tempora mutantur reply.

But ah, when life's early romances
 Are lost in a homely routine ;
 When facts prove more stubborn than fancies,
 And youth is a thing that has been ;
 We set to a melody minor
 The burden so joyous before,
 And murmur with sympathies finer,
 Tempora mutantur once more.

Just think of that grove where we faltered
 Love's tender confession and vow ;
 Aye, truly the times must have altered—
 We'd simply catch cold in it now.
 No longer in lithe adolescence
 We waltz through the night with a will ;
 A twinge from some gouty excrescence
 Mars even the sober quadrille.

Then alack for the loves and the graces,
 For spring and its beauty divine,
 For smiles upon dear vanished faces,
 Which gladdened the days of "lang syne."
 Yet autumn hath hours that are pleasant,
 And blessings around us are cast ;
 Thank God for the peace of the present,
 Thank God for the joy of the past.

SYDNEY GREY.

